

Lead admin of child sex abuse website pleads guilty, faces 20 years to life

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A man described as the lead administrator of a child sexual abuse website pleaded guilty to engaging in a child exploitation enterprise and faces a sentence of at least 20 years and possibly life in prison. The website was “dedicated to the advertisement and distribution of images and videos depicting child sexual abuse,” the federal government said.

William Michael Spearman, a 57-year-old from Alabama, pleaded guilty yesterday in US District Court for the Southern District of Florida, the US Department of Justice announced. Four other defendants were previously convicted of crimes related to “their involvement with the same website,” the DOJ said.

“The website included a section devoted to the sexual abuse of infants and toddlers, a section devoted to images and videos depicting children being subjected to pain and torture, and a section devoted to avoiding detection by law enforcement,” the DOJ said. “As the lead administrator, Spearman managed numerous ‘staff’ members, directed them how to help run the site, recommended other users for promotion, kept records of child pornography files advertised and distributed over the site, presided over staff meetings, praised and scolded users,

and counseled users and other managers about the function and expectations of the website. Spearman also advertised and distributed images over the website.”

Advertisement

Spearman is scheduled to be sentenced on August 31. He “faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 20 years in prison and a maximum sentence of life in prison,” the announcement said.

Website had 100+ registered users

FBI Special Agent David Backlund described details of the case in a November 2022 affidavit. The website—referred to as “target website” in the affidavit—had at least 100 registered members who accessed their accounts with passwords, Backlund wrote.

Website users “traffic in child pornography images and videos via the posting of web links within messages,” the affidavit said. “These links allow a user to navigate to another website, such as a file-hosting website, where images and/or videos were stored in order to download these images and videos. When posting the links, users of the target website also generally include descriptive text that provides information about the sexual acts and age and gender of the child victim depicted in the linked-to child pornography files. The target website provides rules that instruct users to share child pornography in this manner.”

Defendant Selwyn Rosenstein was previously convicted of conspiracy to advertise child pornography, five counts of advertisement of child pornography, and possession of child pornography, the DOJ said. He was sentenced to 28 years in prison and ordered to pay \$85,000 in restitution to victims.

Defendants Gregory Good, Robert Boyles, and Matthew Garrell were convicted of conspiracy to advertise child pornography and conspiracy to distribute child pornography. Their

sentencing hearings are scheduled for August.

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