



# Department of Justice

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## **NORTHERN MICHIGAN MAN SENTENCED TO FIFTY YEARS FOR CHILD EXPLOITATION**

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN — U.S. Attorney Andrew Birge announced that Duane Richard Forrest, age 48, of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, was sentenced to a total of fifty years for photographing and videotaping his sexual exploitation of two boys in their early teens. He was also ordered to pay \$10,200 in special assessments.

“The trauma of sexual abuse can last decades, even a lifetime,” said Birge. “Mr. Forrest’s sentence reflects the seriousness of his crimes and the enduring harm caused when offenders record and preserve their abhorrent exploitation of minors in visual media. Thanks to a partnership between Homeland Security Investigations and Chippewa County, Mr. Forrest was caught and will never be able to victimize the young again.”

In 2020, witnesses told law enforcement that Forrest had sexually abused two minors he had befriended. Police obtained a search warrant for Forrest’s home and found sexual pictures and videos of multiple children, including the two minors that witnesses had identified. Federal and local authorities then jointly investigated the full scope of Forrest’s criminal activity. Forrest was charged federally for producing child pornography and eventually pled guilty. A federal charge related to his possession of child pornography that included images obtained on-line was dismissed pursuant to a plea agreement, but the court could still consider that conduct under federal sentencing guidelines. U.S. District Judge Paul L. Maloney sentenced him to 300 months (25 years) in prison for his exploitation of each of the victims. He ordered that the sentences be served consecutively, meaning Forrest’s total federal sentence is 50 years in prison.

Vance Callender, special agent in charge of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Detroit, observed, “Child sex abuse is a particularly heinous crime, and HSI works with its state and local partners to bring a network of international resources and foreign law enforcement counterparts to bear against those who seek to exploit our most vulnerable.”

Sheriff Michael D. Bitnar of Chippewa County commended the investigators who exposed Forrest’s misconduct, saying, “The work these officers did brought justice to the young victims of this crime. I am very proud of everyone involved in this investigation. There is nothing more important than keeping our children safe from predators like Mr. Forrest.”

Forrest was also separately charged in state court and has pled guilty to a state criminal sexual conduct offense, which encompasses additional unrecorded abuse. A sentencing hearing on the state charge is scheduled for later this month.

This case is part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. The U.S. Attorney's Office, county prosecutor's offices, the Internet Crimes Against Children task force (ICAC), federal, state, tribal, and local law enforcement are working closely together to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children. The partners in Project Safe Childhood work to educate local communities about the dangers of online child exploitation, and to teach children how to protect themselves. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit the following web site: [www.projectsafechildhood.gov](http://www.projectsafechildhood.gov). Individuals with information or concerns about possible child exploitation should contact local law enforcement officials.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Austin J. Hakes prosecuted the federal case. It was investigated by Homeland Security Investigations, a division of U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, as well as the Chippewa County Sheriff's Office.

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