

Burlington Man Pleads Guilty To Possessing Child Pornography

A former civilian employee of the Hanscom Air Force Base pleaded guilty yesterday in federal court in Boston in connection with possessing thousands of files depicting child pornography, including a manual titled "How to Practice Child Love."

William Gates, 41, of Burlington, pleaded guilty to one count of possession of child pornography. U.S. District Court Judge Leo T. Sorokin scheduled sentencing for July 17, 2019. In September 2018, Gates was arrested and subsequently released on conditions.

In November 2017, law enforcement in Boston received information from authorities in Australia about an investigation involving an online personal photo site, known for hosting child pornography. Australian investigators observed a user of the site posting photographs of, and comments regarding, an approximately six-year-old boy on a school bus, who the user identified as a child on a field trip that the user was chaperoning. Australian and U.S. authorities were able to trace the account activity to IP addresses assigned to Gates's home in Burlington and to Hanscom Air Force Base, where Gates was a civilian employee at the time.

During an interview with law enforcement in early December 2017, Gates admitted that he used his iPhone to take some of the photographs while chaperoning a field trip to the zoo with his son's elementary school. After Gates provided written consent, law enforcement conducted a preliminary exam of two of the defendant's digital devices and allegedly located approximately 51 images of child pornography. A month later,

on Jan. 8, 2018, agents executed a search warrant at Gates's home, where they found more than 900 child pornography files. Gates was subsequently indicted by a Middlesex grand jury for possession of child pornography.

During the week of Aug. 27, 2018, further forensic analysis of one of Gates' laptops revealed an encrypted volume, where approximately 5,000 images and 440 videos of child pornography were hidden, as well as a document titled, "How to Practice Child Love," which purports to serve as a guide to teach adults how to have sex with children.

The charging statute provides for a sentence of no greater than 20 years in prison, a minimum of five years and up to a lifetime of supervised release, and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling and Peter C. Fitzhugh, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston, made the announcement today. Valuable assistance was provided by the Burlington Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney Anne Paruti, Lelling's Project Safe Childhood Coordinator and a member of the Major Crimes Unit, is prosecuting the case.

The case is brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In 2006, the Department of Justice created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from exploitation and abuse. Led by the U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the DOJ's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov/.