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United States Attorney's Office
District of Oregon

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Contact: Public Affairs Officer

Phone: (503) 727-1000

USAOR.PublicAffairs@usdoj.gov

Salem Man Sentenced to More Than 10 Years in Federal Prison for Attempting to Entice and Coerce Children Online

EUGENE, Ore.—A Salem, Oregon man was sentenced to federal prison today for requesting sexually explicit materials from undercover law enforcement officers posing as children online and attempting to persuade the purported children to engage in illicit sexual conduct.

Gary Wade Ronning, 40, was sentenced to 130 months in federal prison and ten years' supervised release.

According to court documents, in March 2023, Ronning used Facebook Messenger, an online messaging application, to contact an undercover law enforcement officer posing as a 15-year-old girl as part of a broader investigation into online enticement of minors. For months, Ronning engaged in sexually explicit communications with the officer, requested sexually explicit images of the purported child, sent sexually explicit photos and videos of himself, and planned a meeting to engage in illicit sexual conduct. However, when it came time for the meetup, Ronning did not follow through with his plans.

Between October and November 2023, Ronning communicated with two other undercover officers posing as 13-year-old and 15-year-old children online. Ronning again engaged in sexually explicit conversations, sent sexually explicit images and videos of himself, and attempted to arrange meetups to engage in illicit sexual conduct. During these conversations, Ronning expressed awareness that his actions were illegal and repeatedly reminded the fictitious children not to tell anyone about his plans.

On January 18, 2024, a federal grand jury in Eugene returned a five-count indictment charging Ronning with attempted coercion and enticement of a minor, attempting to use a minor to produce a visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct, and attempted transfer of obscene material to a minor.

On January 22, 2025, Ronning pleaded guilty to attempted coercion and enticement of a minor.

This case was investigated by the FBI and the Redmond Police Department, with assistance from the Salem Police Department. It was prosecuted by William M. McLaren, Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Oregon.

Anyone who has information about the physical or online exploitation of children are encouraged to call the FBI at 1-800-CALL-FBI (1-800-225-5324) or submit a tip online at tips.fbi.gov.

The FBI Child Exploitation Task Force (CETF) conducts sexual exploitation investigations, many of them undercover, in coordination with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. CETF is committed to locating and arresting those who prey on children as well as recovering and assisting victims of sex trafficking and child exploitation.

Federal law defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a minor. It is important to remember child sexual abuse material depicts actual crimes being committed against children. Not only do these images and videos document the victims' exploitation and abuse, but when shared across the internet, re-victimize and re-traumatize the child victims each time their abuse is viewed. To learn more, please visit the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children at www.missingkids.org.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Justice Department to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.justice.gov/psc.

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