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St. Croix Man Pleads Guilty to Coercing Minor and Possessing Child Pornography

Juan Bermudez, 66, faces a minimum of 10 years in prison after admitting to coercing a minor and possessing child pornography. Investigators discovered explicit images and messages conditioning assistance on sexual favors

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Juan Bermudez, a 66-year-old resident of St. Croix, has pleaded guilty to charges of coercing a minor and possessing child pornography, according to an announcement made by United States Attorney Delia L. Smith on Tuesday. The plea was entered before Magistrate Judge Emile A. Henderson, III.

Bermudez faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years, with the possibility of life imprisonment. The final sentence will be determined by a federal judge after taking into account the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory considerations.

"This case is a painful reminder of the inherent dangers the children of our Territory face every day. We must all work together as a community to report individuals committing sexual abuse. The Department of Justice remains steadfast in its commitment to investigate and pursue justice for those who misuse their positions of trust to sexually abuse our children," stated U.S. Attorney Smith.

Court documents detail that on May 1, 2023, Bermudez engaged in sexual intercourse with a minor who was over 13 but under 18 years old. He recorded this act on his cell phone. Following a search warrant, investigators found multiple images of child sexual abuse material involving the minor on Bermudez's device. Text messages between Bermudez and the minor also surfaced, showing Bermudez conditioning his assistance on receiving sexual favors, referred to in the messages as "Cookie," a term he admitted was a euphemism for the minor's vagina.

The investigation was conducted by Homeland Security Investigations and the Virgin Islands Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Rhonda WilliamsHenry and Everard Potter under the umbrella of Project Safe Childhood, a national effort launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Project Safe Childhood coordinates federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals exploiting children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information on this initiative, visit <http://www.justice.gov/psc>.

The public is encouraged to report suspected child predators or any suspicious activity through Homeland Security Investigations' toll-free hotline at (800) 981-3030 or by calling (787) 729-6969.