

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Resident Sentenced to Seven Years in Federal Prison for Possessing Child Sexual Abuse Material

John Paul Cunningham was sentenced to 84 months in federal prison after investigators uncovered thousands of images of child sexual abuse material during an inquiry that began with a cyber tip and led to a search of his online accounts.

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ST. CROIX — A St. Croix man has been sentenced to seven years in federal prison after being convicted of possessing child sexual abuse material, following an investigation that began with a cyber tip from a major technology company and led to the discovery of

thousands of illicit images.

John Paul Cunningham, 31, was sentenced on January 12 to 84 months in prison, followed by 15 years of supervised release, and ordered to pay a \$100 special assessment. The sentencing was handed down by Senior District Judge Wilma A. Lewis. The court will determine restitution at a later date.

The investigation began on or about May 5, 2020, when the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received a cyber tip from Google regarding activity tied to a Gmail account linked to a user on St. Croix. The report indicated that the account had been used to view or upload what appeared to be child sexual exploitation material.

Subscriber information provided to law enforcement identified the Gmail account as belonging to Cunningham. Investigators obtained associated contact information, which further linked the account to him.

As the case progressed, Homeland Security Investigations learned that Cunningham was planning to travel from St. Croix to the mainland United States. On June 9, 2020, agents located Cunningham at the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport, where they conducted an interview.

With Cunningham's consent, agents searched his Google cloud account. During that search, investigators discovered thousands of images of child sexual abuse material, depicting minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct. Authorities stated that the images were produced using materials that had been mailed, shipped, or transported in interstate or foreign commerce, and that Cunningham knew the visual depictions involved minors.

The case was investigated by Homeland Security Investigations and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Rhonda Williams-Henry.