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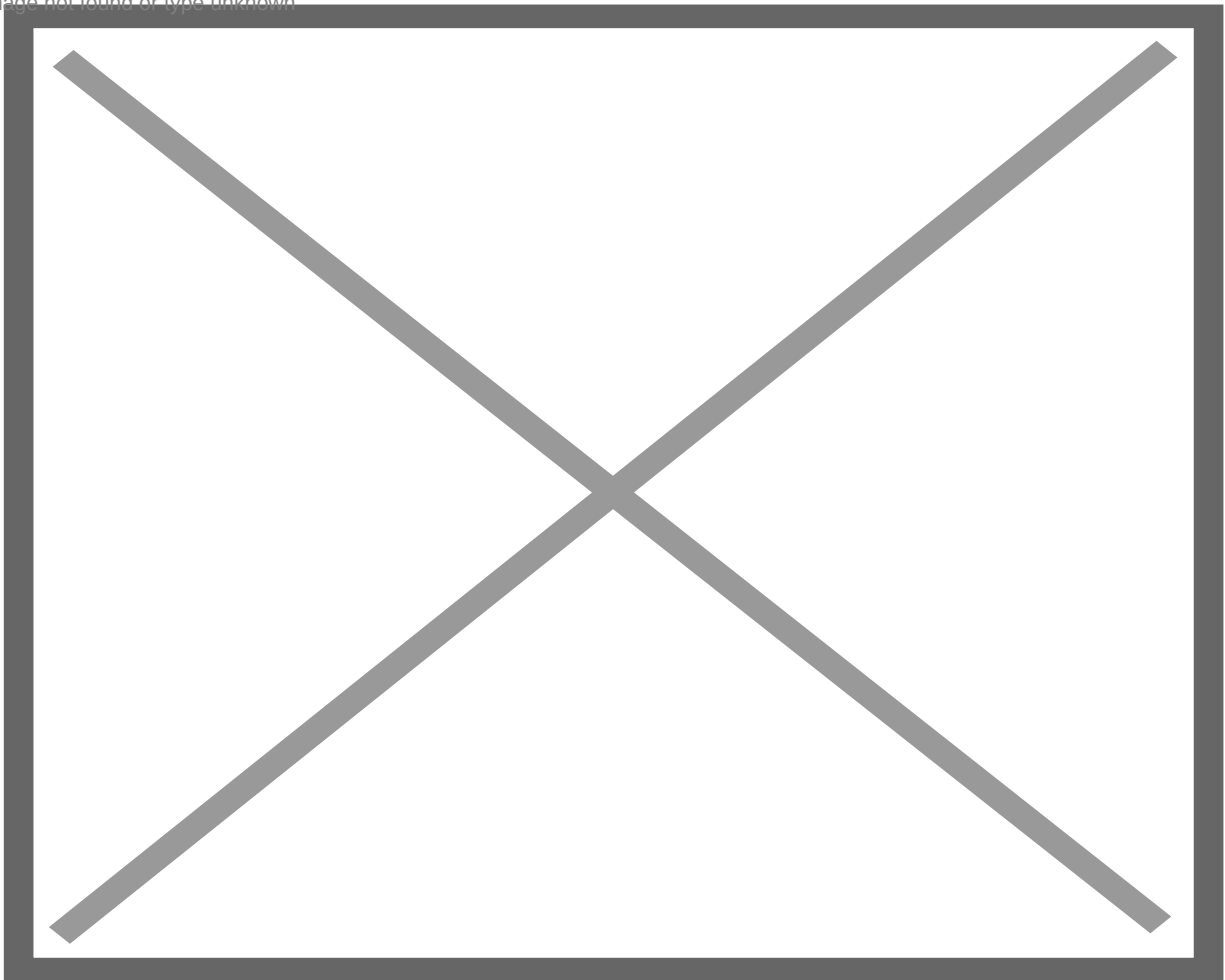
## Federal Jury Convicts 73-Year-Old St. Croix Man of Child Pornography Possession

Federal records show Johnston's case began after a 10-year-old guitar student reported being shown pornography. Police later seized hard drives and an orange flash drive from his home, leading to his federal conviction for possessing child pornography.

Federal / **Published On September 03, 2026 12:19 PM /**

Staff Consortium **September 03, 2026**

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A booking photograph of the 73-year-old St. Croix man convicted by a federal jury of possessing child pornography following a three-day trial in the District Court of the Virgin Islands. By. VIPD.

A federal jury has convicted James Lealand Johnston, also known as "JJ Rocks," of possession of child pornography following a three-day trial, bringing a verdict in a case rooted in a Virgin

Islands police investigation that began more than nine years ago.

Johnston, 73, faces up to 10 years in federal prison and a maximum fine of \$250,000, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of the Virgin Islands. Prosecutors said evidence presented at trial showed that electronic devices seized from Johnston's residence contained numerous images of child pornography on hard drives and a flash drive. The case was investigated jointly by Homeland Security Investigations and the V.I. Police Department.

According to a January 2026 memorandum opinion from the District Court of the Virgin Islands, VIPD Sgt. Alexander Moorhead received a complaint on March 25, 2017 alleging that a minor had been sexually assaulted. Moorhead took statements from the child and the child's parents the following day and used that information to seek arrest and search warrants.

In a pretrial filing summarized by the court, federal prosecutors said the child was 10 years old at the time and had been taking guitar lessons from Johnston on Saturdays beginning in 2016. The child's father reported to police that Johnston had shown his son pornography and had allegedly touched him inappropriately. The child told investigators that Johnston showed him pornographic videos and said those videos were stored on an orange flash drive. Those allegations concerning physical contact were separate from the federal possession charge for which Johnston has now been convicted.

Court records show that a Superior Court magistrate approved an arrest warrant for Johnston as well as search warrants for his residence and vehicle. The warrants were issued based on probable cause that evidence relating to an alleged unlawful sexual contact offense might be found. They were executed on May 1, 2017 by officers from VIPD and Homeland Security Investigations.

During the search, investigators seized several items, including a laptop computer, an orange jump drive and paperwork connected to the investigation, according to testimony later detailed by the federal court.

The orange storage device would ultimately become central to the federal prosecution. In its January 2026 ruling, the court said the government maintained that investigators found the orange flash drive during the search and that forensic examination revealed images involving minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct. Prosecutors argued that the child's earlier description of the same orange device helped establish Johnston's knowledge of what was stored on it.

The federal indictment itself alleged that on or about May 1, 2017, on St. Croix, Johnston knowingly possessed a thumb drive containing visual depictions involving minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct and satisfying the federal interstate-commerce requirements of the child-pornography statute. A federal judge later found that the indictment sufficiently identified both the date of the alleged offense and the specific storage device at issue.

The federal prosecution did not begin immediately after the 2017 search. The United States filed a criminal complaint against Johnston on August 29, 2018, more than a year later. Federal authorities arrested him on August 31, and he was released on bond on September 4. Prosecutors filed a one-count information on September 28, and a federal grand jury returned an indictment on November 15, 2018 charging Johnston with possession of child pornography.

The ensuing litigation was extensive.

In February 2020, then-Chief District Judge Wilma Lewis suppressed a statement Johnston gave investigators following his 2017 arrest. The government conceded that the second set of Miranda

warnings given to Johnston was inadequate, while arguing that he had been properly advised earlier at his residence. The court ultimately found that prosecutors had failed to establish by a preponderance of the evidence that Johnston had been fully advised of his Miranda rights before the interrogation.

That ruling did not eliminate the physical evidence seized from Johnston's home.

Johnston later sought to suppress those items, arguing in part that he had not been provided with the search warrants during their execution. After a November 2021 evidentiary hearing, the court rejected that argument. Judge Lewis credited Moorhead's testimony that he retrieved copies of the warrants from his vehicle and provided them to Johnston after arriving at the residence. The court also noted that the government produced the arrest warrant and both search warrants during the hearing and that Johnston did not challenge their underlying validity.

The physical evidence was therefore allowed to remain in the federal case. Johnston subsequently mounted additional efforts to suppress evidence and dismiss the prosecution, including challenges based on the Speedy Trial Act and allegations of vindictive prosecution. Those challenges were also rejected.

The extraordinary duration of the case is also addressed directly in court records. In January, the court said the federal trial had originally been scheduled for November 15, 2018 but had been continued 13 times at Johnston's request. Eleven of the requests cited a need for additional time to prepare for trial or file pretrial motions, while others involved issues including the availability of defense counsel or an essential witness.

Meanwhile, Johnston faced a separate case in the V.I. Superior Court stemming from the original allegations involving the child.

He was arraigned in May 2017 on a territorial charge of unlawful sexual contact. According to the January federal court opinion, however, prosecutors moved to dismiss that case without prejudice on August 22, 2025, shortly before it was scheduled for trial, because the alleged victim did not want to cooperate with the prosecution. The Superior Court granted the dismissal that day. Johnston was therefore not convicted of the territorial sexual-contact charge.

That development did not end the federal prosecution for possession of child pornography.

In another important pretrial ruling in January, Judge Lewis determined that evidence alleging Johnston had shown the child pornography could be admitted in the federal case because it was potentially probative of whether he knowingly possessed the orange flash drive and knew what it contained. The court, however, ruled that evidence concerning the separate allegation that Johnston had fondled the child was not admissible under the evidentiary theories then advanced by prosecutors.

The case was subsequently before U.S. District Judge E. Mannion, who issued another pretrial ruling in April concerning the anticipated testimony of Sgt. Moorhead. The court granted a government request preventing the defense from introducing a judicial credibility finding made against Moorhead in an unrelated Superior Court case as extrinsic impeachment evidence.

After years of pretrial litigation, a federal jury this week ultimately found Johnston guilty of the single federal possession charge.

The U.S. Attorney's Office has not announced a sentencing date. Assistant U.S. Attorney Rhonda Williams-Henry prosecuted the case.

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