

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Thomas Taxi Driver Pleads Guilty To Transporting Minor For Sex

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ST. THOMAS -- Lennox Phillips, 58, pleaded guilty today in District Court here to one count of transportation of a minor for sex, United States Attorney Ronald W. Sharpe announced via press release late Tuesday. At the conclusion of the hearing, District Court Judge Curtis V. Gomez remanded Phillips into the custody of the United States Marshals Service. Phillips' sentencing is scheduled for April 7, 2016.

As part of his plea, Phillips admitted that he befriended a 13-year-old female while transporting her to and from school in his taxi van. During the course of that activity, Phillips and the minor became involved in a sexual relationship, and Phillips transported the minor to secluded areas where they engaged in sexual activity. Phillips' unlawful

conduct came to light when an employee at the minor's school observed Phillips transporting the minor away from the school on numerous occasions when the minor should have been attending school.

"Anyone who targets children for sexual exploitation should consider themselves a target of HSI and our law enforcement partners," said Angel M. Melendez, special agent in charge of HSI San Juan and USVI. "Our special agents will continue using their investigative authorities to identify, apprehend and prosecute those who, despite all of our efforts, think they can abuse our children and get away with it."

Phillips faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison and a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. He also faces a maximum fine of \$250,000. Suspected child exploitation or missing children cases should be reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children via its toll-free 24-hour hotline at 202-514-5678, or U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) at (340) 693- 2250.

This case was investigated by HSI, the Virgin Islands Police Department, and the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Everard E. Potter.