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St. Croix Man Who Admitted to Downloading 'Thousands' of Child Pornography Images and Videos Sentenced to 76 Months Imprisonment

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ST. THOMAS — United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced today that Judge Robert Molloy sentenced Collin Gomes, 27, of St. Croix, to 78 months in prison for possession of child pornography and five years of supervised release.

Gomes was also ordered to pay special assessments in the amounts of \$100 and \$5,000, respectively. The court also ordered \$3,000 restitution to each of the three victims.

According to court documents, on or about August 16, 2018, September 6, 2018 and October 22, 2018, a Grand Prairie, Texas police detective was conducting an online investigation on the BitTorrent network for offenders sharing child pornography. BitTorrent is a communication

system for peer-to-peer file sharing that enables users to distribute data and electronic files over the Internet in a decentralized manner. Files are shared on the BitTorrent network via use of “torrents,” which provide addresses identifying computers that can send portions of a requested file. With the assistance of a torrent file, the user can download small portions of the original file.

As a result of information collected by Grand Prairie, Texas law enforcement, officers initiated an investigation for a device on the IP address used by the defendant, because it was associated with a torrent with a particular infohash (an SHA-1 hash value of the data describing the files within the torrent). The torrent files referenced a number of files, at least one of which was identified as child pornography. On each of the dates referenced above, a download of files was successfully completed from the device that the defendant’s IP address was making available. Officers confirmed that each download contained child pornography.

On December 14, 2018, Homeland Security Investigations executed a search warrant on the defendant’s residence on St. Croix. Agents explained to the defendant what they were searching for and advised him of his rights. The defendant waived his rights and agreed to speak to the agents. They asked if he viewed, downloaded and made available for download any files containing images or videos depicting child pornography and the defendant said “yes.” The defendant also told the agents he had an HP computer on which he had child pornography and that he had been downloading child pornography since 2011 and collected thousands of images and videos. He stated that there was approximately one and a half Terabytes of material. HSI agents located thousands of child pornography images and videos on the defendant’s computer and external hard drives.

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