

## Retired Navy officer from King George gets year to serve for planning sexual encounter with minor

Keith Epps

Mar 5, 2018

**A** King George County man who made arrangements to meet up for a sexual encounter with someone he thought was a 14-year-old girl was ordered Monday to serve a year in prison.

Thad Joseph Dobbert, 50, a retired Navy captain, was sentenced in Spotsylvania Circuit Court to a total of 10 years in prison with all but one year suspended. He was previously convicted of electronic solicitation of a minor and attempted indecent liberties with a child.

Judge Ricardo Rigual's sentence exceeded the recommended state sentencing guidelines, which called only for probation.

According to the evidence presented by prosecutor Jeff Adams, Spotsylvania Detective Kevin Rickens responded to a Craigslist advertisement toward to end of March last year from a man who was seeking a younger woman.

Rickens claimed to be a 14-year-old girl, but Dobbert was undeterred. He continued exchanging messages with the "teen" for a couple of weeks and Rickens at one point sent him a picture of a teenage girl in a bikini.

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Dobbert, a pilot who had retired from the Navy a few months earlier, made plans to meet up with the girl on April 14 at the Goodwill Industries building on Market Street in Spotsylvania. He told the girl he would be in his "red crappy pickup truck."

Rickens and six other law-enforcement officers were waiting in unmarked vehicles when the pickup drove through a nearby motel parking lot before turning away from the planned meeting spot. The truck was stopped and Dobbert was arrested.

Defense attorney Ghislaine Storr Burks said Dobbert's actions that night showed that he was having second thoughts about the planned meeting. Adams countered that it was more likely that Dobbert had noticed something that "spooked" him.

Storr Burks argued for an active sentence of no more than 90 days, citing Dobbert's stellar military record, a pending new job and the continued support of his wife. Adams said a sentence of "years" would be more appropriate.



Dobbert

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