

ALERT TOP STORY

Spotsylvania man sentenced in child predator sting

Keith Epps

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A man who sought sexual contact with someone he thought was a 10-year-old girl was ordered Monday to serve at least 15 years in prison.

Matthew Tobias Erickson, 42, of Spotsylvania County, was sentenced to a total of 255 years with most of it suspended. He was previously convicted of 26 counts of soliciting a minor and 10 counts of possessing child pornography.

Judge William Glover's sentence included a number of concurrent sentences, which greatly reduced the actual number of years Erickson has to serve. But the sentence was also somewhat confusing to the lawyers involved in the case.



Erickson

Defense attorney Price Koch believes the judge's active sentence calls for Erickson to serve 15 years. But prosecutors Ryan Mehaffey and Jeremy Theisen were under the impression that Erickson will be serving 25 years.

Erickson was caught in a sting set up by an online group that specializes in catching child predators. A woman from Indiana was online pretending to be a child when she corresponded with Erickson.

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Erickson reached out to the “girl” during the latter part of 2021, telling her she was beautiful and sending her 26 sexually explicit videos.

Eventually the “child” told Erickson she would be coming to Virginia to visit an aunt. Erickson arranged a meeting with the girl, but instead received a visit from members of the predator group. He admitted to his actions, and the Spotsylvania Sheriff’s Office was contacted. Child pornography images were later recovered from his phone.

The charges Erickson were convicted of carry a mandatory minimum of 255 years in prison, but Koch successfully argued that Glover could run the sentences concurrently, meaning each sentence could be served at the same time. Koch suggested that five years was enough.

Prosecutor Jeremy Theisen argued against any concurrent sentences. He said Erickson had gotten a deferred disposition on similar charges years ago, “yet here we are again.

“This man is dangerous and a predator,” Theisen said. “The fact that his prey wasn’t who he thought doesn’t make it any better.”

Erickson, who was described by his mother as a “child in a man’s body,” apologized for his actions prior to being sentenced. He told Glover he is not a pedophile and would never hurt any child.

“This has been a nightmare for me,” Erickson said.

Glover called Erickson’s actions “vile and unacceptable by any standard.” He said the videos Erickson sent online were the worst things he’d ever seen.

Glover wasn’t much happier with the internet group that led to Erickson’s arrest. He said they could have contacted the Sheriff’s Office after the first video instead of letting him put out 25 more.

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