



THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE

United States Attorney's Office
District of South Dakota

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: February 28, 2023

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Watertown Man Charged with Several Counts of Child Pornography

SIOUX FALLS - United States Attorney Alison J. Ramsdell announced that a federal grand jury has indicted a Watertown, South Dakota, man for two counts of Production of Child Pornography and one count of Receipt and Distribution of Child Pornography.

Ted Jeffrey Hurkes, age 44, was indicted in February of 2023. He appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark A. Moreno on February 24, 2023, and pleaded not guilty to the Indictment.

The maximum penalty upon conviction is up to 30 years in federal prison and/or a \$250,000 fine, life years of supervised release, and \$300 to the Federal Crime Victims Fund. Restitution may also be ordered.

The Indictment alleges that on October 2, 2022, and again on November 12, 2022, Hurkes knowingly employed, used, persuaded, induced, enticed, and coerced a minor female to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing visual depictions of such conduct.

The Indictment also alleges that between on or about October 2, 2022, and January 13, 2023, Hurkes knowingly received and distributed, and attempted to receive and distribute, any child pornography that had been mailed, shipped, and transported in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce by any means, including by computer.

The charges are merely accusations and Hurkes is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

The investigation is being conducted by Homeland Security Investigations and the Watertown Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeffrey C. Clapper is prosecuting the case.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse, launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by the U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the DOJ's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/psc>.

Hurkes was remanded to the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service pending trial, which has been set for May 2, 2023.

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