Man pleads guilty to sex with boys on Haiti missionary visits

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The U.S. Attorney's office says a Stuarts Draft man entered guilty pleas today in federal court for using missionary visits in Haiti to have sexual conduct with boys between five and 17. Prosecutors say 40-year-old James Arbaugh did so over a nine-year period. He will be sentenced in June.

From the U.S. Attorney's Office: United States Attorney Rick A. Mountcastle announced today the guilty plea of a local man to a charge of traveling in foreign commerce to engage in illicit sexual conduct with a minor. James Daniel Arbaugh, 40, of Stuarts Draft, Va., pleaded guilty today in the United States District Court in Harrisonburg to one count of traveling in foreign commerce from the United States to Haiti and engaging in illicit sexual conduct with a person under the age of 18. The defendant will be sentenced on June 13, 2018 at 10:30 a.m. and faces a maximum statutory penalty of up to 30 years in prison and/or a fine of up to $250,000. The court will determine the appropriate sentence after considering federal sentencing statutes and the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines.

According to a factual proffer presented to the court at today's hearing by Assistant United States Attorney Jeb Terrien, Arbaugh admitted to engaging in illicit sexual conduct with minors while traveling in Haiti between 2008 and 2017. While traveling in Haiti, Arbaugh regularly visited communities and villages throughout the country, including remote villages, where he evangelized and showed Christian-themed movies. While engaging in these missionary activities, Arbaugh befriended, groomed, and ultimately engaged in illicit sexual conduct with multiple, minor male children between the ages of 5 and 17 years old.

The investigation of the case was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations and the Harrisonburg Police Department. Assistant United States Attorney Jeb Terrien and Kaylynn Shoop, a Trial Attorney with the Justice Department's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section are prosecuting the case for the United States.

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 U.S. Attorneys' Offices and CEOS, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit http://www.justice.gov/psc.