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Prosecutor satisfied with deal in child porn case

Joseph Guarascio to be sentenced Jan. 11

By Veronica Gonzalez

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A local prosecutor is pleased with a plea agreement that will result in a lengthy prison term for the owner of a private police force. Joseph Guarascio pleaded guilty to producing child pornography because he made a sex tape with his 17-year-old girlfriend.

Connie Jordan, an assistant district attorney for New Hanover County, said that in exchange for pleading guilty to the federal charge of producing child porn, other sex charges against Guarascio that involved another underage girl were dropped.



File photo

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For that, Guarascio faces 15 to 30 years in federal prison, said attorney Ethan Ontjes of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

"He pleaded guilty to the most serious charge, which was the manufacturing charge," Ontjes said.

Though the age of consent in North Carolina is 16, it is illegal to film sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18.

Guarascio's attorney said the plea was good for his client as well.

"If he entered a plea in federal court, the state was going to dismiss the charges on the pending offenses," Edwards said. "That's part of the reason we went to federal court."

Guarascio is scheduled to be sentenced Jan. 11. In the meantime, he is being held at the Piedmont Regional Jail in Farmville, Va..

For Jordan, Guarascio's federal plea meant that he would be punished more severely than he would have been in state court. There was the added benefit of sparing the 14- and 17-year-old girls a trial.



“For us to be able to have a disposition where he goes to prison for decades without a victim having to take the stand is ideal,” she said.

Guarascio was charged with making child pornography after investigators confiscated his cell phone and computer during a search of his house. On his computer, investigators found more than 3,000 images of child porn. Guarascio was not charged with having the images on his computer.

Authorities had searched Guarascio’s house after a 14-year-old girl had reported to police that Guarascio had sexually assaulted her in October last year. Charges of statutory sex offense and indecent liberties involving the 14-year-old girl were dropped as part of the federal plea agreement, Jordan said. Other charges involving his 17-year-old girlfriend also were dropped as part of the deal, she said.

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