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Trenton Man Detained in Child Pornography, Sexual Assault Case

Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo J. Onofri reported today that an investigation into online child exploitation has resulted in the arrest and detention of a Trenton man.

Detectives with the prosecutor's Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Unit recently received information from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that an individual in Mercer County was distributing child pornography. An investigation was initiated and Kevin Pearsall, 30, of Trenton, was identified as a subject. On February 11, 2022, detectives with the prosecutor's office detained Pearsall without incident at the Hamilton Walmart where he is employed. Pearsall's cell phone was seized pursuant to a search warrant and approximately 30 videos depicting child pornography were located, including one that Pearsall shared with another person. Pearsall was charged with second-degree distribution of child pornography, second-degree possession with the intent to distribute child pornography and third-degree possession of child pornography.

Detectives continued their investigation and discovered that Pearsall and the other individual engaged in the exchange of child pornography as well as sexually explicit conversation regarding sexual abuse and the sexual exploitation of children. Additionally, evidence was obtained that Pearsall actively promoted and directed the sexual assault and abuse of a five-year-old child during the conversation with this other individual. The Mercer County Prosecutor's Office filed additional charges against Pearsall, including two counts of first-degree aggravated sexual assault as an accomplice, second-degree conspiracy to commit aggravated sexual assault and third-degree endangering the

welfare of a child as an accomplice. The investigation of the individual Pearsall conversed with is active and ongoing.

Last week, a hearing was held in Mercer County Superior Court and Judge Robert W. Bingham II granted the prosecutor's office motion to detain Pearsall pending trial. Assistant Prosecutor Allie Beyrouy, ICAC unit chief, represented the state.

The first-degree offense of aggravated sexual assault carries a potential sentence of 25 years to life in state prison, along with the requirement to register pursuant to Megan's Law. Second-degree crimes carry a sentence of five to 10 years in state prison and a fine of up to \$150,000. Third-degree crimes carry a sentence of three to five years in state prison and a fine of up to \$15,000.

Prosecutor Onofri urged anyone with information about suspected improper contact by unknown persons communicating with children via the internet or possible exploitation or sexual abuse of children to please contact his Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Unit at 609-989-6568 or the New Jersey Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force tip line at 888-648-6007.

Despite having been charged, every defendant is presumed innocent until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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Kevin Pearsall