DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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POSTAL WORKER ARRESTED, CHARGED WITH CONSPIRACY TO PRODUCE CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Investigators looking for help from the public

BUFFALO, N.Y.-U.S. Attorney Trini E. Ross announced today that Michael Fratini, 36, of Dunkirk, NY, was arrested and charged by criminal complaint with conspiracy to produce child pornography. The charge carries a mandatory minimum penalty of 15 years in prison and a maximum of 30 years.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Aaron J. Mango, who is handling the case, stated that according to the complaint, on February 14, 2022, the Erie County Sheriff's Office contacted the FBI's Child Exploitation Task Force and stated that Fratini used his cellular telephone to solicit nude photos and videos of the pre-pubescent daughters of a female acquaintance (Witness 1), whom he met in October 2021 through a dating application. After meeting in person, Witness 1 did not hear from Fratini again until recently when they spoke over the telephone and Fratini told Witness 1 that he had a mother/daughter fantasy. He then sent a follow-up text message asking for videos and/or pictures of Witness 1's daughters to fulfill his fantasies. After receiving the text message, Witness 1 filed a report with the Sheriff's Office. At the direction of the Sheriff's Office, Witness 1 continued text message conversations with Fratini. On March 18, 2022, investigators surveilled Fratini leaving his workplace, the U.S. Postal Service on Grant Street in Buffalo, and travel to an Amherst hotel where he was expecting to meet Witness 1. After arriving at the hotel, Fratini was taken into custody.

Members of the public who have information related to this case are asked to call the Federal Bureau of Investigation at 716-856-7800.

Fratini appeared at a detention hearing before U.S. Magistrate Judge Jeremiah J. McCarthy and was ordered detained.

The criminal complaint is the result of an investigation by the Erie County Sheriff's Office, under the direction of Sheriff John Garcia and the Federal Bureau of Investigation Child Exploitation Task Force, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Stephen Belongia.

The fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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