



Department of Justice

**United States Attorney Stephen R. Wigginton
Southern District of Illinois**

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CONTACT: James L. Porter
PHONE: (618) 628-3700

**BELLEVILLE MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTOR CHARGED WITH
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF A MINOR**

Stephen R. Wigginton, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today that Christopher M. Horton, 20, a Belleville martial arts instructor who lives in Highland, Illinois, was charged in United States District Court (federal), in a two-count Criminal Complaint, with Sexual Exploitation of a Child. In making this announcement, United States Attorney Wigginton noted that the federal charges were brought as part of a joint investigation and prosecution undertaken by his office, as well as the St. Clair County State's Attorney's Office and the Madison County State's Attorney's Office. The alleged federal violations took place between on or about May 1, 2012, and February 9, 2013, in Madison and St. Clair Counties. After a federal detention hearing held today, the Court ordered that Horton be held without bond pending trial. Charges and bonds in both St. Clair and Madison Counties have also been filed.

"The facts alleged in the criminal complaint are shocking and horrific. I will use all of my resources to ensure that these charges are proven beyond a reasonable doubt so that this person is placed where he can never prey upon our children again," said United States Attorney Wigginton.

US Attorney Wigginton's comments were echoed by Saint Clair County State's Attorney Brendan Kelly, who said, "These alleged crimes against our children demand the swift and severe action taken by the US Attorney, my office, and my counterpart in Madison County."

Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons noted: "I want to thank everyone who played a role in the investigation and charging of the defendant. By working together, we were able to uncover the

vile acts committed by this man. These types of investigations are always heartbreaking and we will do everything we can to ensure that this predator is punished and removed from society and our victims get the justice they deserve.”

The offenses charged in the federal complaint allege that, between on or about May 1, 2012, and February 9, 2012, Horton video recorded himself engaged in sexual activity with two minors.

A federal trial date has not yet been set. If convicted of Sexual Exploitation of a Minor, Horton faces a term of imprisonment of not less than fifteen (15) years but not more than 30 years of imprisonment on each count, a fine up to \$250,000, and a term of supervised release of not less than five years, up to, and including, a lifetime of supervision once he is released.

A criminal complaint is a formal charge against a defendant that is comprised of the essential facts constituting the offense charged. Under the law, a defendant is presumed to be innocent of a charge until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt to the satisfaction of a jury.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys’ Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who sexually exploit children, and to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.usdoj.gov/psc. For more information about internet safety education, please visit www.usdoj.gov/psc and click on the tab “resources.”

The case was investigated by the Madison County Sheriff’s Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Metro East Cyber Crimes and Analysis Task Force, the Highland, Illinois Police Department and the Belleville, Illinois Police Department. The case is assigned to Assistant United States Attorney Ali Summers.

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