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Charleston County man, 61, gets 20 years for sex crimes involving children

2023-009431

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, October 30, 2025

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. – A Charleston County jury found Juan Marcos Cotto, 61, guilty of Attempted Criminal Sexual Conduct with a Minor, Second Degree, and Criminal Solicitation of a Minor.

The investigation into Cotto began in July 2023 when the Charleston County Sheriff's Office, which is a member of the South Carolina Attorney General's Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, hosted "Operation Cast Net," a weeklong undercover chat operation involving officers from across South Carolina. Cotto began an online conversation with an undercover law enforcement officer, who was posing as a 13-year-old girl. After acknowledging the child's age, the defendant continued to have a sexual conversation with the undercover persona. Cotto repeatedly called and messaged the undercover persona to plan to meet for a sexual encounter. He traveled to a preplanned location to meet the 13-year-old for sex, where he was taken into custody by law enforcement officers.

When interviewed by Attorney General Investigators, Cotto claimed he was conducting his own anti-child abuse investigation when he traveled to meet the child. The online conversation with the child persona was located on Cotto's phone upon forensic examination.

He was booked at the Sheriff Al Cannon Detention Center. Booking photos can be found online at <https://inmatesearch.charlestoncounty.org/>. For photos of people already released, click the "Show Past Bookings" box.

The Honorable Heath Taylor sentenced Cotto to 20 years, suspended upon 15 years active and 5 years probation, in reference to the Attempted Criminal Sexual Conduct; and 10 years active in reference to the Criminal Solicitation of a Minor. Those sentences will run concurrently. He will have to register as a sex offender if released.

Officers from the Mount Pleasant Police Department, Charleston County Sheriff's Office, and SC Attorney General's Office contributed to this investigation. The case was prosecuted by the South Carolina Attorney General's Office.

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