



ERIK NASARENKO
VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NEWS RELEASE



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Man Sentenced for Rape and Other Sex Crimes Against Minors

VENTURA, Calif. – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Connor Joseph Kerns (DOB 07/31/02), of Thousand Oaks, was sentenced on March 19, 2024, to 19 years state prison for violent sex crimes against two minors that he sexually extorted online. Kerns previously pled guilty on February 2, 2024, to three felony charges including forcible rape, and forcible oral copulation on a minor over 14. The third count involved forcible sexual acts on a minor under 14 years old.

In July 2021, Kerns contacted his first victim, a 16-year-old girl, through Snapchat. They had multiple conversations and Kerns was aware she was underage. He eventually coerced her into sending him sexually provocative pictures of herself, which he saved to his phone. Days later, another Snapchat user with the name Dexter—who in reality was Kerns—contacted the victim, saying he had hacked Kerns' Snapchat account, and threatened to post the victim's provocative pictures online unless she agreed to send him nude photos/videos of herself. Scared she would get in trouble, the victim complied.

However, Kerns did not stop there. He used the Dexter account to demand that the victim engage in numerous sexual acts in person with Kerns. Hoping to end the abuse, the victim again complied out of fear. Over the next several days, Dexter would make more demands of the victim, which ultimately led her to contact law enforcement.

An investigation by the Ventura County Sheriff's Office (VCSO), revealed that in January 2022, Kerns had used Snapchat to similarly victimize a 13-year-old girl from Los Angeles County. Just as before, Kerns again coerced this victim into sending him numerous sexually explicit photos/videos of herself. He then threatened to leak her photos and videos online if she did not follow his additional demands. Fortunately, the victim told her parents who reported it to the Los Angeles Police Department.

On June 23, 2022, Kerns was arrested by the VCSO and charged in Ventura County Superior Court for the conduct described above.

Deputy District Attorney Benjamin Moreno, a member of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office Sexual Assault Unit, prosecuted the case.

"The severity of this sentence highlights the defendant's appalling crimes while demonstrating the perils of social media," Mr. Moreno said. The defendant sexually exploited vulnerable young girls, inflicting irreparable harm in the process. This sentence sends a clear message that such despicable acts won't be tolerated, and sexual predators will face full prosecution. We hope it serves as a reminder to parents to stay vigilant and discuss social media risks with their children."

In 2022, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) reported online enticement of children saw an increase of 82 percent between 2021-2022. One of the contributing factors in that growth was an alarming spike in reports of financial sextortion, a crime in which kids are targeted to share explicit photos, and then threatened by offenders that they will share the images with the child's friends, family, or others if they don't give the predator money. Several of these cases have had tragic outcomes with panicked children taking their own lives.

Parents can help protect their children by educating them of the risks and dangers of online interactions with people they do not know and by teaching them healthy internet habits. Parents are encouraged to monitor their children's internet usage and set limits.

Case: 2022015290

Defendant Information:

Connor Joseph Kerns (DOB 07/31/02)
Thousand Oaks



Pled Guilty to:

- PC 261(a)(2) – Forcible rape
- PC 287(c)(2)(C) – Forcible oral copulation on a minor over 14
- PC 289(a)(1)(B) – Forcible penetration of genital and anal opening of a child under 14 years old

Special Allegations:

- PC 264 (c)(2) – Victim was 14 years of age or older
- CRC 4.421(a)(3) – Victim was vulnerable
- PC 1203.065(a) – Violent sex offenses
- PC 784.7(a) – Ventura County has jurisdiction