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United States Attorney's Office
District of Oregon

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Oregon Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for Kidnapping Ex-Girlfriend

PORTLAND, Ore.—A Oregon man was sentenced to federal prison today for kidnapping his ex-girlfriend and transporting her from her home in Ilwalco, Washington to Rainier, Oregon.

James Donald Cooley, 61, a resident of Rainier, was sentenced to 120 months in federal prison and three years' supervised release.

According to court documents, on May 18, 2020, Cooley traveled from his home in Rainier to his ex-girlfriend's home in Ilwalco without notice or invitation. After parking his vehicle on the side of Highway 101 near his ex-girlfriend's home, Cooley approached the woman and a confrontation ensued. Cooley grabbed the woman's arms, tied her hands with zip ties, and began pulling her toward the highway. Cooley drug the woman several hundred feet to his vehicle, put a knife to her throat, shoved her into the backseat, and began driving back to Rainier, threatening to kill her several times en route.

When Cooley arrived at his residence, his sister, who also lives in Rainier, spotted Cooley's ex-girlfriend at his residence. The ex-girlfriend told Cooley's sister that she feared Cooley was going to kill her. Cooley's sister immediately contacted the Columbia County Sheriff's Office to report the incident. Sheriff deputies responded and arrested Cooley.

On June 17, 2020, Cooley was charged by criminal complaint with kidnapping. On February 11, 2022, Cooley waived indictment and pleaded guilty to the single charge.

This case was investigated by the FBI with assistance from Columbia County Sheriff's Office. It was prosecuted by Greg Nyhus, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the U.S. Attorney's Office in the District of Oregon.

Domestic violence involving a current or former partner is a serious crime that includes both physical and emotional abuse. Sometimes these crimes are hidden from public view with survivors suffering in silence, afraid to seek help or not knowing where to turn. The traumatic effects of domestic violence also extend beyond the abused person, impacting family members and communities.

If you or someone you know are in immediate danger, please call 911.

If you need assistance or know someone who needs help, please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline by calling 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or texting "START" to 88788. Many communities throughout the country have also developed support networks to assist survivors in the process of recovery.

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