

US Judge Rejects Plea Deal in Pedophile Case

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A US federal judge rejected an eight-to-12-year prison plea deal for convicted pedophile Richard Schmidt, who admitted traveling to Cambodia and the Philippines to have sex with boys, according to a media report.

"Ten years just doesn't seem to be enough in this case," US District Judge Andre Davis said of the plea deal on Friday after a US im-

migration official testified about many of the 12 boys Schmidt is accused of abusing, according to The Associated Press.

Davis said he would be willing to sentence Schmidt to 17 and one-half years for his crimes. Schmidt was deported from Cambodia to the US in February under the US Protect Act, which allows prosecutions for child sex crimes committed abroad. If a plea bargain cannot be reached, a trial

would require victims and their families to testify in the US.

"The quality of the evidence has to be the best possible, or else it will be torn to pieces by the defense," said Aarti Kapoor, legal adviser to the child protection NGO Afesip. "The [victims'] statements can come out differently than they did originally," Kapoor said. "This could be a risk that maybe the prosecution doesn't want to take," she said.