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INDIANAPOLIS MAN SENTENCED IN CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CASE

WASHINGTON— Michael Barnhorst, 42, of Indianapolis, was sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment, after being convicted on three counts of receiving child pornography, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and Acting U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana Timothy Morrison announced today.

In pleading guilty before Chief United States District Judge Larry J. McKinney, Barnhorst admitted that he possessed images with photos of children engaged in various sexual acts. Barnhorst had been previously convicted on two counts of child molestation in 1994.

The case arose from “Operation Emissary,” a U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) nationwide investigation which began in 2006. The investigation focused on a commercial Web site offering access to videos and images of hardcore child pornography. The Web site alerted would-be subscribers that subscribing to the Web site was illegal and warned them to be discreet about their purchases. Investigators targeted Barnhorst, who purchased access to the website and was then intercepted downloading three illegal images depicting the sexual abuse of children. A search warrant was thereafter executed at his residence, and a forensic examination of the hard drive seized there revealed numerous images of child pornography, including those downloaded from the intercepted website. As part of the resulting nationwide sweep by ICE, more than 208 arrests have been made since June 2007.

In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit <http://www.projectsafchildhood.gov>.

As part of his sentence, the district court ordered Barnhorst to pay a \$5,000 fine and to forfeit all of the computer equipment and pornography involved in the offense. The Court also ordered him to serve a lifetime period of supervised release following his release from imprisonment.

The case is being prosecuted jointly by Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven DeBrotta for the Southern District of Indiana and Trial Attorney LisaMarie Freitas of the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) of the Criminal Division. The case was investigated by ICE, the

Indiana State Police, the Indiana Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, and a forensic examination of the computer evidence was conducted by CEOS' High Tech Investigative Unit.

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