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JACKSONVILLE MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL CHARGE OF ADVERTISING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Jacksonville, FL - U.S. Attorney Robert E. O'Neill, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Jacksonville Field Office of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Ralph DeFelice, and Jacksonville Sheriff John Rutherford, announced today that Robert Francis Bricker pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Jacksonville to a charge of advertising child pornography. Bricker, age 51, had been arrested at his residence in Jacksonville after being indicted by a federal grand jury, and has been in custody since his arrest. At sentencing, Bricker will face a minimum mandatory sentence of not less than 15 years' imprisonment and up to 30 years' imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

According to court documents, during 2007, agents with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") office in Seattle, Washington conducted an investigation of individuals who were trading images of child pornography using a particular internet file sharing program. As part of this operation, an ICE agent in Seattle established an undercover online identity and used this identity to communicate with other individuals on this file sharing program. On October 23, 2007, the agent established contact through the "chat" function with an individual using the screen name "stratocon." The agent had

previously found notices posted by “stratocon” on a particular Internet website (the “Advertising Website”) where computer users post notices to advise other users as to what pictures they would like to trade. The agent and “stratocon” engaged in electronic chat conversation, during which “stratocon” transmitted approximately 79 images of child pornography. Subsequently, ICE agents determined that “stratocon” was actually Robert Francis Bricker, and identified his residence in Jacksonville. This information was forwarded to ICE agents in Jacksonville.

According to court documents, ICE agents checked the Advertising Website and discovered that Bricker had posted notices and advertisements seeking to trade images of child pornography on January 13, 2007, September 21, 2007, and November 23, 2007. Bricker posted these and other notices and advertisements on the Advertising Website so that other computer users would see them, make electronic contact with him (Bricker), and trade images of child pornography with him over the Internet.

According to court documents, on December 17, 2007, ICE agents and Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office (“JSO”) detectives executed a federal search warrant at Bricker’s residence in Jacksonville. Among other things, Bricker told the agents that he maintains a collection of child pornography involving children under the age of 10, and saved images to the “My Documents” folders on the computer. Bricker described the process of using the particular Internet file sharing program, stating that he would first go to the Advertising Website, log in with his user ID, and then tell them what he wanted. When questioned about the compact disks found near his computer, Bricker indicated that he downloaded images to the computer and then saved the images to the disks.

According to court documents, the forensic analysis of the computers and other media seized from Bricker revealed over 7,000 unique images depicting child pornography. Many of these images depicted sadistic and/or masochistic conduct. The analysis showed that Bricker had traded images of child pornography over the Internet with at least 85 different individuals in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The chat logs showing these transmissions of images of child pornography were also discovered. During one such chat on September 29, 2007, one particular user indicated that the user had seen one of Bricker's advertisements on the Advertising Website. The user and Bricker then exchanged images of child pornography. On all of the computer media seized from Bricker, there were approximately 413,000 images which appeared to depict minor children.

This case is part of Project Safe Childhood. In February 2006, the Department of Justice created Project Safe Childhood, a national initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and sexual abuse. Led by the United States Attorney's 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 on Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

This case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Jacksonville and Seattle, Washington, and by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney D. Rodney Brown.