



U.S. Department of Justice

**Terrence Berg
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For Immediate Release:

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Sep 30, 2008

EVENT: Sentenced

Defendant: Michael N. Runnestrand

**SAN DIEGO TEACHER'S AIDE SENTENCED
FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF A CHILD**

Michael N. Runnestrand, a former resident of Hollywood, California, and Carlsbad, California, was sentenced to 95 months imprisonment for receiving child pornography and transferring obscene material to a minor, Acting United States Attorney Terrence Berg announced today. Berg was joined in the announcement by Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard and FBI Special Agent in Charge Andrew G. Arena in Detroit. Judge Lawrence P. Zatkoff imposed the sentence.

Runnestrand served as a teacher's aide for a sixth-grade class in 2003 in Carlsbad, California, a suburb of San Diego. Runnestrand befriended an 11-year-old girl in the class, and later began communicating with her over the Internet. After the victim's parents moved the family to Michigan, Runnestrand continued to communicate with the girl. Runnestrand persuaded and enticed the girl to make homemade videos and take photographs of herself and send them to him over the internet. Runnestrand consistently spoke to the victim using instant messaging services, and convinced her to send him dozens of pictures and several movies. After the victim told her mother about these crimes, law enforcement officers became involved, and continued communicating with Runnestrand using the child's online identity.

Runnestrand made several incriminating statements before eventually being arrested in California.

Acting U.S. Attorney Berg said, "This defendant violated his position of trust as a teacher to groom and manipulate a young girl who had been his student. This type of exploitation combined well-known grooming techniques with the new media of the Internet. Parents must be alert to the fact that the Internet continues to be used by adults who are seeking the sexual exploitation of children. Today's lengthy prison sentence should also serve as a warning to those who exploit our children that we will do everything in our power to bring them to justice, and the punishment will be severe."

Berg praised the courage of the young victim in this case and her family for coming forward to seek prosecution. Berg also praised the work of the Oakland County Sheriff's Office, as well as the FBI for their professionalism and dedication in their aggressive and thorough investigation of these cases.

Assistant United States Attorney Kevin M. Mulcahy prosecuted this case for the United States.