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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TAMPA MAN ENTERS PLEA OF GUILTY TO RECEIPT OF IMAGES OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Tampa, FL - United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill announced today that DALE HITCHINGS pleaded guilty to receiving images of minors engaging in sexually explicit conduct. HITCHINGS was indicted on November 7, 2007.

According to the plea agreement, HITCHINGS, age 35 and a resident of Tampa, was discovered by law enforcement officers from the Brevard County Sheriff's Office to be engaging in the online sharing of files containing images of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct. After further investigation, federal law enforcement agents obtained a search warrant for the defendant's home and executed it on August 9, 2007. During the execution of that search, agents discovered that HITCHINGS was in possession of numerous images of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct and that he was sharing those images on line. Forensic investigation confirmed that HITCHINGS had received from others outside of Florida many of the images which he then later shared online.

This case was investigated by the United States Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, with the assistance of the Brevard County Sheriff's Office. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jay L. Hoffer.