



# Department of Justice

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## **MISSOURI MAN CONVICTED OF TRAVELING TO GEORGIA TO HAVE SEX WITH TEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL**

Atlanta, GA - A jury in federal district court has returned a guilty verdict against JOSEPH MICHAEL MOONEY, 57, of Farmington, Missouri on charges of using a computer connected to the Internet to entice a child to engage in sexual activity and with traveling across state lines with the intent to have sex with a child under the age of 12.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said of today's verdict, "It is beyond disturbing that a 57-year-old man would try to entice a 10-year-old child to have sex and then travel to Georgia with the intent to have sex with that child. Today's conviction sends a strong message to those with similar aims – we will investigate and prosecute you to the fullest extent of the law. As a result of today's conviction, and in accordance with the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, the Defendant will be sentenced to at least 30 years in jail."

The jury found MOONEY guilty on both counts of the Indictment. According to United States Attorney Nahmias and the information presented in court, on January 25, 2007, MOONEY drove from Farmington, Missouri to Atlanta, Georgia to meet a woman whom he believed to be the mother of a 10-year-old girl. MOONEY traveled from Missouri intending to have sex with the 10-year-old girl. MOONEY had chatted with the mother on a Yahoo! chat room for over one year and also spoke with her on the telephone on many occasions. During the chats and phone calls, MOONEY repeatedly, and in graphic terms, described the sexual acts he wanted to perform on the child. Additionally, MOONEY e-mailed naked pictures of himself to the mother and asked if she showed the images to her daughter. MOONEY then arranged to meet the mother at a restaurant parking lot near I-75 and Mt. Zion Road on January 25, 2007. When MOONEY arrived at the agreed-upon meeting place, he was arrested. Upon arrest, MOONEY admitted that he had chatted with the mother about having sex with the 10-year-old and was going to spend the night with the mother and daughter. The "mother" was in fact a Clayton County Police Officer operating undercover with the Safe Child Task Force. No 10-year-old girl actually existed.

At trial, MOONEY testified in his own defense and claimed that, although he engaged in all of the recorded calls and internet chats, he did not intend to have sex with the 10-year-old. Instead, he claimed that he was traveling to Georgia to save the child and report the mother to the police. After only a short deliberation, the jury rejected MOONEY's claim.

MOONEY faces a mandatory minimum of 30 years in prison and could receive a maximum sentence of life in prison and a fine of up to \$500,000. Sentencing is scheduled for October 12, 2007, at 2:30 p.m. before United States District Judge Thomas W. Thrash, Jr..

This case was investigated by Task Force Agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation Safe Child Task Force in conjunction with the Clayton County Police Department.

Assistant United States Attorney Aaron M. Danzig is prosecuting the case.

This case is being brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales launched Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and 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 about Project Safe Childhood, please visit [www.projectsafchildhood.gov](http://www.projectsafchildhood.gov).

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is [www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan).