



Department of Justice

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**MISSOURI MAN SENTENCED TO 30 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON
FOR TRAVELING TO GEORGIA
TO TRY TO HAVE SEX WITH A 10-YEAR-OLD CHILD**

ATLANTA, GA - JOSEPH MICHAEL MOONEY, 57, of Farmington, Missouri, was sentenced to 30 years in prison today by United States District Judge Thomas W. Thrash, Jr., on charges of attempting to entice a child to engage in unlawful sexual activity and crossing a state line with the intent to have sex with a child under the age of 12.

“A 57-year-old man who tries to entice a 10-year-old child to have sex with him, and then drives across several states with the intent of having sex with that child, poses an extreme danger to children, and Congress has rightly imposed a 30-year minimum prison sentence for this type of case,” said United States Attorney David E. Nahmias. “Our message to pedophiles is simple: We will investigate, prosecute, and convict you, and under federal law, you are likely to spend the rest of your life in prison.”

MOONEY was sentenced to 30 years in prison to be followed by supervised release for the remainder of his life. Congress abolished parole in the federal system in 1984, and consequently, federal defendants are incarcerated for at least 85 percent of their sentence. A jury convicted MOONEY of these charges on July 23, 2007.

According to United States Attorney Nahmias and the information presented in court: Starting in December 2005 and continuing through January 2007, MOONEY engaged in dozens of Internet chats with a woman whom he believed was the mother of a 10-year-old girl. MOONEY also engaged in numerous telephone calls with the mother and a girl whom he believed was her daughter in his effort to have sexual intercourse with both the mother and daughter. In both the Internet chats and telephone calls, MOONEY described in explicit detail the sexual conduct he planned for the child. MOONEY also sent the mother several pictures of his face and penis, and asked her to show the pictures to her daughter. MOONEY arranged to meet the mother at a restaurant in Atlanta and to spend the night with her and her daughter. MOONEY, who is married and the father of three grown children, then told his wife that he had to make a business trip to Georgia. On January 25, 2007, he drove from Missouri to Georgia, and he was arrested when he

arrived at the rendezvous point in Atlanta. Upon arrest, MOONEY admitted to FBI Task Force agents that he had been chatting on the Internet with a mother of a 10-year-old girl, and that he planned to spend the night with them. In fact, the “mother” was a Clayton County Police Officer who is a member of the FBI Safe Child Task Force, and an FBI employee posed as the daughter in telephone calls with MOONEY.

At trial, MOONEY admitted that he engaged in the Internet chats and telephone calls. But he insisted that he did not intend to have sex with the child and, instead, traveled to Georgia to save the child and report the mother to the police. The jury rejected MOONEY’s story after brief deliberations. In the sentencing today, Judge Thrash observed that MOONEY’s testimony was unbelievable and the evidence against him was overwhelming.

MOONEY was convicted of two counts: using a computer connected to the Internet to attempt to entice a minor to engage in unlawful sexual activity, and crossing a state line with the intent to have sex with a child under the age of 12. In enacting the Adam Walsh Act in 2006, Congress raised the mandatory minimum sentence for the attempted enticement charge to 10 years, and it imposed a mandatory minimum sentence of 30 years for the traveling charge. Judge Thrash imposed both terms, to be served concurrently, for a total term of 30 years. MOONEY is the first defendant in the Northern District of Georgia to receive the 30-year mandatory minimum sentence.

This case was 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.projectsafechildhood.gov.

This case was investigated by the FBI Safe Child Task Force and the Clayton County Police Department.

Assistant United States Attorneys Aaron Danzig and William G. Traynor prosecuted the case.

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.