



PRESS RELEASE

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**FORMER FEDERAL CONTRACTOR ARRAIGNED ON
FEDERAL CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGES**

ALBUQUERQUE – This morning in federal court, Lawrence Lucero, 65, of Tucumcari, N.M., was arraigned on a five-count indictment charging him with three counts of receipt of a visual depiction of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct, and two counts of possession of matter containing visual depictions of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct. After Lucero entered a not guilty plea to the indictment, a United States Magistrate Judge ordered Lucero detained pending trial.

According to the indictment, Lucero received and possessed child pornography between March 26, 2012 and May 2, 2012 in Rio Arriba County, N.M. At the time of the offenses alleged in the indictment, Lucero was employed as a social worker by a company that provided healthcare staff for the Veterans Affairs Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Las Vegas and Espanola, N.M., pursuant to a contract with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The maximum penalty for a conviction on each receipt of child pornography count is imprisonment for not less than five years and not more than twenty years, and the maximum penalty for a conviction on each possession of child pornography count is ten years of imprisonment. If convicted, Lucero also would face up to a lifetime of supervised release and would be required to register as a sex offender.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Lucero was charged based on an investigation by the Office of Inspector General, Department of Veterans Affairs. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Charlyn E. Rees, and was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, 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 to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit <http://www.justice.gov/psc/>.

Charges in indictments are only accusations. All criminal defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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