



PRESS RELEASE

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**FORMER STATE CORRECTIONS OFFICER PLEADS GUILTY
TO FEDERAL CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGE**

ALBUQUERQUE – This morning, Duane Chavez, 27, of Los Lunas, N.M., entered a guilty plea to an information charging him with access with intent to view a visual depiction of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct under a plea agreement with the U.S. Attorney's Office, announced U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales.

Under the terms of the plea agreement, Chavez will be sentenced to 36 months of imprisonment to be followed by a term of supervised release to be determined by the sentencing judge. The plea agreement also requires that Chavez register as a sex offender after he completes his prison sentence. Chavez was remanded into the custody of the U.S. Marshal's Service after entering his guilty plea. He will remain detained pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

The information to which Chavez pleaded guilty charged Chavez with knowingly accessing child pornography with the intention of viewing it between Jan. 2011 and March 7, 2012, in Valencia County. At the time of the offense, Chavez was employed as a prison transport officer by the New Mexico Corrections Department.

According to the plea agreement, in Jan. 2012, the New Mexico State Police (NMSP) began an undercover investigation aimed at identifying those who possess, receive and distribute child pornography. After the investigation revealed that an IP Address subscribed to Chavez's residence was participating in the distribution of child pornography, investigators with the New Mexico Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force executed a search warrant at Chavez's residence on March 7, 2012, and seized a computer and computer-related media.

In his plea agreement, Chavez admitted that, while the search warrant was executed, he voluntarily participated in a recorded interview with ICAC Task Force officers during which he admitted that he used a file-sharing program to down-load child pornography. Chavez also acknowledged that a forensic examination of his computer and computer-related media revealed 15 files containing child pornography, including an image of a child who has been identified as a child pornography victim and has been rescued.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Charlyn E. Rees is prosecuting the case, which was investigated by the Los Lunas Police Department, the NMSP, Homeland Security Investigations, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the New Mexico Corrections Department, and the New Mexico Regional Computer Forensic Laboratory. Chavez was charged as part of Operation Artemis, an investigative effort by federal, state and local law enforcement affiliates of the New Mexico ICAC Task Force aimed at identifying individuals throughout New Mexico involved in the distribution, receipt, and possession of child pornography through peer-to-peer file sharing programs.

In March 2012, federal, state and local law enforcement officers executed thirteen unrelated federal and state search warrants at residences throughout New Mexico, and seized computers and computer-related evidence related to child pornography offenses. To date, five individuals have been arrested for violating federal and state child pornography laws based on the search warrants executed as part of Operation Artemis. The law enforcement agencies that participated in Operation Artemis include: Homeland Security Investigations, NMSP, New Mexico Attorney General's Office, FBI, Albuquerque Police Department, Los Lunas Police Department, Santa Fe Police Department, Rio Rancho Police Department, and the New Mexico Regional Computer Forensic Lab.

Operation Artemis was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice (DOJ) to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by United States Attorneys' Offices and DOJ's 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/>.

The Operation also was brought as a part of the New Mexico ICAC Task Force's mission, which is to locate, track, and capture Internet child sexual predators and Internet child pornographers in New Mexico. There are 61 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies associated with the ICAC Task Force, which is funded by a grant administered by the New Mexico Attorney General's Office. Anyone with information relating to suspected child predators and suspected child abuse is encouraged to contact federal or local law enforcement.

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