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TRAFFICKER OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY RECEIVES 18-YEAR SENTENCE IN FEDERAL PRISON

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA— Former Daleville resident, Edward Lee Edens, Jr., age 49, was sentenced Friday to 216 months in federal prison for knowingly transporting, receiving, and possessing child pornography over the internet, U.S. Attorney Leura G. Canary announced today. In handing down the sentence, the Honorable Myron H. Thompson, United States District Judge for the Middle District of Alabama, noted a number of aggravating factors in the case, including the fact that Edens had not simply possessed images of young children being sexually abused but had also traded those images online with other internet users. Judge Thompson also found that some of the child pornography images and videos in the case depicted children under the age of twelve being sexually penetrated by adult men.

The sentence is the culmination of an undercover investigation initiated in 2005 by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Buffalo, New York. While signed on to America Online, agents observed Edens trading child pornography images and videos under the screen name "Cartoonstradeer." During the course of the investigation, Edens sent an undercover FBI agent a video of an adult male engaging in sexually explicit conduct with a four-year-old girl. Ultimately, agents obtained a federal search warrant for Edens' home in Daleville and seized a desktop computer found to contain over 600 child pornography images and 17 videos. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children was able to identify many of

the children depicted in the illicit images as known child victims from other states and countries.

A federal jury sitting in Dothan, Alabama, found Edens guilty on all six counts of the indictment on November 14, 2008, after two full days of trial. Michael B. Trotter, a computer forensic examiner with the Alabama District Attorney's Association – Office of Prosecution Services, testified during the trial that additional evidence of child pornography trafficking had been found on the hard drive of Edens' computer and that the images had been sorted into folders. The jury also heard testimony that Edens had admitted his involvement with child pornography to FBI agents. After the verdict was returned, Judge Thompson commented briefly on the case in open court: "I thought the evidence here was just incredible. It was totally depraved. Words cannot capture what I saw and heard."

At sentencing, the government presented statements from several of the child victims depicted in the images. According to one such victim, now 19, the fear she lives with is not just in knowing that images of her sexual abuse continue to circulate on the internet, but that those images could actually lead to the sexual abuse of other children: "I am horrified by the thought that other children will probably be abused because of my pictures. Will someone show my pictures to other kids? Will they see me and think it's okay for them to do the same thing? Will some sick person see my picture and then get the idea to do the same thing to another little girl?"

As part of his sentence, upon his release from prison, Edens will spend 15 years on supervised release, with tight restrictions on his ability to use a computer or to have contact with anyone under the age of 18. Edens will also be required to register as a convicted sex offender.

"The possession, receipt and transportation of child pornography is not a victimless crime. The horrific images of sexual abuse of children are loaded on the internet and viewed by offenders over and over again. Each time they are viewed, a child is re-victimized. The U.S.

Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Alabama will continue to make the prosecution of these cases a priority," stated Leura G. Canary, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Alabama.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In May 2006, the U.S. Department of Justice launched Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), 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 www.projectsafechildhood.gov/.

Assistant United States Attorney Nathan D. Stump prosecuted the case.