



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Florida

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**GEORGIA MAN INDICTED ON FEDERAL CHARGE
OF ATTEMPTED ONLINE ENTICEMENT OF A MINOR CHILD
TO ENGAGE IN ILLEGAL SEXUAL ACTIVITY**

Jacksonville, Florida - U.S. Attorney Robert E. O'Neill announced the federal grand jury indictment and arrest yesterday of Brandon Meredith Hardy (20, Valdosta, Georgia). The indictment charges Hardy with attempted enticement, via the Internet, of a person whom he believed to be a minor child, for the purposes of engaging in illegal sexual activity. If convicted, Hardy faces a mandatory minimum sentence of at least 10 years and up to life imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Hardy was arrested at Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, and is scheduled to appear for an arraignment and detention hearing before U.S. Magistrate Judge Joel B. Toomey on May 31, 2011 at 2:00 p.m. at the United States Courthouse in Jacksonville.

This case was investigated by the Child Predator Cybercrime Unit of the Florida Attorney General's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, and the U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney D. Rodney Brown.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed one or more violations of federal criminal law, and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.

This case 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 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.