



PRESS RELEASE

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**ARMY RECRUITER FROM MIDLAND, TEX., ARRESTED ON FEDERAL CHILD
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION CHARGES**

ALBUQUERQUE – This morning, **Arnold Gonzales** made his initial appearance in federal court in Albuquerque on a criminal complaint charging him with (1) interstate travel with intent to engage in illicit sexual conduct with a minor, and (2) using communication facilities to coerce and entice a minor to engage in a criminal sexual act. Gonzales, 26, is a military recruiter employed by the U.S. Army who is stationed in the U.S. Army Recruiting Station in Midland, Tex. If convicted of the charges in the complaint, Gonzales faces a minimum of 10 years and up to life imprisonment, and a lifetime of supervised release. Gonzales also will be required to register as a sex offender, if convicted.

Gonzales was arrested in Clovis on May 2, 2012, and is temporarily detained pending a preliminary hearing and a detention hearing, both of which are scheduled for May 4, 2012.

According to the criminal complaint, between April 24, 2012 and May 2, 2012, Gonzales allegedly used a computer and cellular phone to entice an individual whom he believed to be under 18 years of age to engage in sexual activity. The complaint also alleges that Gonzales traveled from Oklahoma, Okla., to Clovis, N.M., for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity with a person whom he believed to be a 12-year-old girl.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Gonzales was charged as the result of an undercover investigation by the Curry County Sheriff's Office (CCSO). The complaint alleges that, on April 24, 2012, Gonzales responded to an online advertisement placed by a CCSO undercover agent that was entitled, "CUTE/YOUNG IF AGE DOESN'T MATTER HIT ME UP," in an E-mail that included two photos of himself, including one in his military uniform. Gonzales' E-mail initiated a stream of E-mail and texting communication during which the CCSO agent represented himself as a 12-year-old girl whose family would be relocating to Germany in two week, and Gonzales asked the "girl" to send him nude photos of herself in sexually explicit positions and discussed the sexual acts that he wanted to engage in with the "girl."

The complaint alleges that on May 1, 2012, Gonzales sent a text to the CCSO agent indicating that he would be traveling to Clovis the following day for the purpose of having sex with the “girl.” On May 2, 2012, Gonzales allegedly arrived at a location in Clovis provided to him by the CCSO agent and was arrested by the CCSO. According to the complaint, Gonzales allegedly arrived in a vehicle with a government license plate and was “on duty” when he was arrested.

The case was investigated by the CCSO and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Charlyn E. Rees. It 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 www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

The case also was brought as part of the New Mexico Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force whose mission it 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 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.

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

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