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FORMER FRESNO COUNTY SHERIFF'S SERGEANT SENTENCED TO 14 YEARS IN PRISON FOR RECEIVING AND POSSESSING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

WASHINGTON – Ronald B. Vaughn Jr., 42, a former sergeant for the Fresno County, Calif., Sheriff's Department was sentenced to serve 168 months in federal prison for child exploitation offenses, Acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew Friedrich of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of California McGregor W. Scott announced today. Senior U.S. District Court Judge Oliver W. Wanger also ordered Vaughn to register as a sex offender and remain on supervised release for 30 years.

On Feb. 29, 2008, after a 27-day trial, a federal jury in Fresno convicted Vaughn of two counts of possessing and attempting to possess child pornography, as well as one count of receiving and attempting to receive child pornography. The evidence and testimony at the trial established that between 2000 and 2001, Vaughn investigated child exploitation offenses as a detective in the Sex Crimes Unit of the Sheriff's Department. He later became a sergeant and transferred out of the unit in June 2001. He left the department entirely in 2004 to operate "Ron Vaughn Jr. Photography," a private photography business that specialized in photographing weddings, students and area sports teams.

While working in the Sex Crimes Unit in 2000, Vaughn gained access to approximately 275 still and video images of child pornography, 100 of which were discovered on a CD-ROM found in his photography studio in November 2005. Vaughn raised numerous defenses at trial, including that he was legally authorized to receive and possess child pornography by virtue of his position at the Sheriff's Department. However, the evidence and testimony in the case established that the CD-ROM was created in October 2002 – after Vaughn left the Sex Crimes Unit.

At trial, evidence showed that a forensic analysis of a computer Vaughn shared with his ex-wife, a computer he shared with his ex-girlfriend and his own personal laptop computer revealed that the CD-ROM found in Vaughn's photography studio had been viewed or copied on each of the computers. Also discovered on Vaughn's three computers was evidence that a user downloaded files with titles indicative of child pornography using a peer-to-peer file sharing program not involved in any case that Vaughn investigated for the Sheriff's Department. Peer-to-peer software programs permit computer users connected to the Internet to link computers around the world, for the purpose of sharing files. Such programs can also be used to search for and download child pornography. Evidence found on Vaughn's laptop and presented at trial showed that he used the peer-to-peer program to download at least six images depicting the rape

and molestation of children, at least two of which featured a minor whose abuse had not been photographed until after Vaughn left the Sex Crimes Unit.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David L. Gappa of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of California and Trial Attorney Jill Trumbull-Harris of the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS). The investigation in the case was conducted jointly by the Fresno County Sheriff's Department and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in Fresno. Computer forensic analysis and expert trial testimony was provided by the High Tech Investigative Unit of CEOS.

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