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FLORIDA 'CHILD MODELING' WEB SITE OWNERS INDICTED FOR CONSPIRING WITH ALABAMA PHOTOGRAPHER TO PRODUCE CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

WASHINGTON – A federal grand jury in Birmingham, Ala., has indicted two Florida men and a Web site corporation on charges of conspiring to use minors to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing visual depictions and with knowingly transporting in interstate commerce visual depictions of minors engaging in sexually explicit conduct, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Alice H. Martin for the Northern District of Alabama announced today.

The 80-count indictment unsealed today charges Marc Evan Greenberg, 42, Jeffrey Robert Libman, 39, and Webe Web Corporation, all of the Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. area.

A two-count criminal information charging Jeff Pierson, 43, of Brookwood, Ala. was also unsealed today. Pierson was charged with conspiring to transport child pornography in interstate commerce using a computer from January 2003 through 2004, and with having transported child pornography in interstate commerce using a computer during that time.

“The indictment alleges that these defendants conspired to produce pornographic images of under-aged girls posing in lascivious positions for profit, under the pretense of offering professional modeling services,” said Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division. “The Department of Justice is committed to the protection of our children from those who violate the law and sexually exploit minors for commercial gain.”

“The images charged are not legitimate child modeling, but rather lascivious poses one would expect to see in an adult magazine. Here lewd has met lucrative, and exploitation of a child’s innocence equals profits,” said U.S. Attorney Alice H. Martin.

The Indictment alleges that from December 2002 through April 2005, Greenberg, Libman, and Webe Web, conspired with Pierson to use minors to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing visual depictions of that conduct. Specifically, it is charged that Greenberg and Libman established a purported “child modeling” Web site business under the name Webe Web Corporation. The business operated using three primary Internet Web sites: a central Web site, an advertising Web site, and Web sites for each individual child “model.”

Webe Web’s central Web site represented to be “a Web site to promote models ages 7 thru 16 and their photographers.” On the central Web site, a “gallery” or “previews” of 15-21 photographs of various underage female children could be viewed for free. If the viewer wanted to see additional photographs, he would click “Join” and subscribe to the “models” individual Web site where he could view approximately 100 photographs of the child. The typical cost to

view each individual child's website was \$25 per month to subscribe and \$20 per month thereafter.

Webe Web promoted subscriptions to these individual sites through its free advertising Web site. Babble Club allowed members to receive a "free sample" of images of the children. It encouraged the purchase of subscriptions to individual child Web sites, and hosted discussion boards/groups which were devoted to each individual child's Web site. Babble Club members made postings to the discussion boards, which included comments on specific images they liked, the type of clothing and poses they liked, and poetry written to the photographed child. Certain members posted expressions of fondness and devotion for a photographed child. Most of the Babble Club members were adult men who were not affiliated with the modeling industry.

After a viewer "subscribed" he could view numerous photographs of the individual child which were not accessible on Webe Web's central or advertising Web sites. These individual sites were similar in domain name style with the child's name followed by model. In order to encourage continued monthly subscriptions, Webe Web would regularly update the photographs posted and delete older photographs. Webe Web had groups of photographers under contract that supplied images and in return received a percentage of the gross subscription fees generated at the various sites.

The Indictment stated that Pierson was a photographer who produced visual depictions of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct in Alabama and transmitted those images to Greenberg, Libman, and Webe Web in Florida. They then posted the images to the individual Web sites, and advertised and promoted photographs through Babble Club.

Specifically, the indictment alleges that in 2002, Libman and Pierson began communicating about this business venture. During 2003, Pierson sent children's photographs to Florida from Alabama which depicted sexually explicit conduct. These images were subsequently used to create different individual child websites for Webe Web in 2003. In December of 2003, Pierson received a "profitability detail statement" from Webe Web outlining his 2003 profits generated by the individual child's websites.

In 2004, Pierson again sent children's photographs from Alabama to Florida which depicted sexually explicit conduct. These images were subsequently used to create additional individual child Web sites. During 2004, Pierson received monthly statements which detailed the number of subscriptions to each of the individual child Web sites, the gross income of each site, and his cut of the proceeds. He also had numerous conversations with the defendants regarding the updating of images, drop in subscriptions, issues with postings or banners, and suggestions on how to conceal dates of his pictures when discussions on Babble Club regarding a date were posted that could hurt sales on the site. Pierson's photography accounted for a substantial portion of the images of children posted by Webe Web.

If convicted of this conspiracy Greenberg and Libman face a penalty of imprisonment of not less than 15 years nor more than 30 years, and a fine of \$250,000. The corporation faces a fine of \$500,000.

If convicted on the charges in the Information, Pierson faces a penalty of imprisonment of not less than five years nor more than 20 years on each count and a fine of \$250,000 on each count.

“The Webe Web investigation is the culmination of countless hours of dedicated law enforcement officers and prosecutors in an aggressive law enforcement action that will bring justice to those who exploit our children across the United States,” stated Carmen Adams, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Birmingham Field Division.

“The U. S. Postal Inspection Service is very pleased to join in the efforts to investigate anyone suspected of trafficking child pornography. Postal Inspectors are committed to aggressively pursuing anyone suspected of using the United States Mail to sexually exploit children and seeking their prosecution to the fullest extent of the law,” said Martin D. Phanco, Inspector in Charge, Atlanta Division.

Counts 2 through 79 in the indictment charge Greenberg, Libman, and Webe Web with knowingly transporting in interstate commerce visual depictions of a minor engaging in sexually explicit conduct. These allegations involve images of children which were published between 2004 and 2005. If convicted, the defendants face a possible penalty of not less than 5 years and not more than 20 years in federal prison, and a fine of \$250,000 per count.

Count 80 in the indictment seeks forfeiture of proceeds traceable to these offenses but not less than \$600,000 in addition to real property located at 1881 Middle River Drive, Condominium #201, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. 33305, and Internet domain names and Web site content associated with the business.

The joint investigation is being conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jim Phillips is prosecuting this case in cooperation with Department of Justice Trial Attorney Jennifer Toritto Leonardo of the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section in the Criminal Division.

Members of the public are reminded that the indictment and information contain only charges. A defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government’s burden to prove a defendant’s guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

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