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FOUR CHARGED IN CHICAGO INDICTMENTS RESULTING FROM INTERNATIONAL, INTERNET-BASED CHILD PORNOGRAPHY INVESTIGATION

CHICAGO – Three suburban Chicago men and an Iowa woman were indicted here on federal child pornography charges for allegedly participating in a private Internet “chat room” used to facilitate the trading of thousands of illegal images, federal authorities announced today. The four Chicago defendants are among 27 individuals who have been charged as a result of an international undercover investigation that infiltrated the chat room, where some defendants transmitted streaming video of live molestations through online instant messenger services to participants around the world.

A federal grand jury in Chicago returned two indictments – one against three defendants and another against a fourth individual – late yesterday. Federal and state charges against a total of 13 U.S. defendants in nine federal districts and one state were announced today at a press conference in Chicago by Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales; Julie Myers, Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); Tony Warr, Acting Chief of Toronto Police Services; Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; and Elissa A. Brown, Special Agent-in-Charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Chicago.

The first Chicago indictment charges three defendants with one count each of conspiracy to possess, receive, solicit and distribute child pornography. The defendants are **Brian A. Annoreno**, also known by his screen name, “Acidburn,” 29, of Bartlett; **Gregory J. Sweezer**, aka “Behrplus_925,” 48, of Aurora; and **Lisa A. Winebrenner**, aka “HumbleDuchess,” 36, of Osceola, Iowa. The second indictment charges **David B. Holst**, aka “Yyydbh5182,” 27, of North Aurora, with one count each of possession and receipt of child pornography.

Fourteen additional defendants have been charged in Canada, Australia and Great Britain in connection with activity in the chat room known as “Kiddypics & Kiddyyids” which was hosted on the Internet through the WinMX software program that also allowed users to engage in “peer-to-peer” file sharing.

“Today’s charges involve the most disturbing of allegations,” Mr. Fitzgerald said. “The victimization of children in the depraved manner described can never be tolerated. We are grateful for the extremely close cooperation between federal, state and local investigators and prosecutors around the country led by the strong efforts of ICE investigators here in Chicago and the

international cooperation spearheaded by Canadian authorities. The sort of conduct alleged in today's charges will continue to draw the attention and energies of federal, state and local law enforcement as it must."

Ms. Brown, of ICE, said: "Predators who victimize children, among our most vulnerable citizens, must know that we will not rest until they are brought to justice. I cannot describe with words the harm that these crimes inflict on children. Individuals who engage in such conduct should know that they will be fully prosecuted for hurting our children."

Mr. Fitzgerald also acknowledged the assistance of the Illinois Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force, which operates out of Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan's office. The ICAC assisted in the investigation and arrests of the Illinois defendants. Also assisting in the Illinois portion of the investigation were the Lake County State's Attorney's Office the Police Departments in Aurora, North Aurora and Bartlett, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Iowa, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

According to the conspiracy indictment, between April 2005 and March 10, 2006, Annoreno, Sweezer and Winebrenner conspired with each other and others to trade images of child pornography through their participation in the "Kiddypics & Kiddyvids" chat room. The indictment lists the screen names of 24 other individuals who participated in the chat room and shared files from computers around the country and around the world. Those other individuals, while not charged in the Chicago indictment, either face pending child pornography charges in the United States or abroad or have already been prosecuted in Canada or England.

The indictment alleges that Annoreno and others agreed to use and did use minors to produce images of child pornography, which were made available to other participants in the chat room, including streaming videos of live molestations. In April 2005, Annoreno allegedly used an infant to produce child pornography, which he transmitted live, via the Internet, to another participant in the chat room using the screen name "Big_Daddy619." That individual was involved in producing live videos of four minors being molested, according to the indictment. In October 2005, Annoreno allegedly used the same infant to produce a photographic image of child pornography, which he allegedly provided to Holst.

The chat room was maintained by a "host" and various "administrators" selected by the host, each of whom had special privileges, including establishing rules for participants, according to the indictment. The primary host of the chat room was Royal Raymond Weller, aka "G.O.D.," of Clarksville, Tennessee, who was arrested March 6 on federal child pornography charges in Tennessee. The indictment alleges that on March 8, 2006, Winebrenner, who was previously an administrator and had received child pornography through the chat room, became the host and assumed responsibility for maintaining accessibility for its participants. Over the next two days, Winebrenner allegedly destroyed evidence that she possessed child pornography on her computer, advised others through an online discussion to destroy any such images, and discussed a contingency plan to continue the chat room in the event she were to be arrested.

The conspiracy count also alleges that on Feb. 11, 2006, Sweezer distributed two video images of child pornography to an individual whom he believed was a participant in the chat room, but who in fact was an ICE agent who had assumed the identity of a chat room participant to conduct the undercover investigation.

Annoreno was arrested on January 8, 2006, and was ordered detained in federal custody. In addition to conspiracy, he was also charged with two counts of manufacturing child pornography and one count of distribution. Sweezer was arrested on March 9 and later released on a secured bond. He was charged with one count each of possessing, receiving and distributing child pornography, as well as conspiracy. Winebrenner was arrested last night in Iowa and is facing one count of conspiracy.

Holst was arrested on January 11 and was released on bond pending further proceedings.

If convicted, the charges brought in the Chicago indictments carry the following maximum penalties on each count: manufacturing child pornography – mandatory minimum of 15 years in prison and a maximum of 30 years; distribution and receipt of child pornography – mandatory minimum of 5 years and a maximum of 20 years; possession of child pornography – 10 years in prison; and conspiracy – 5 years in prison, and a \$250,000 fine.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Monika Bickert and Mark Schneider.

The public is reminded that indictments contain only charges and are not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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