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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, April 14, 2011
WWW.JUSTICE.GOV/USAO/MN

Delaware man pleads guilty, woman indicted on production of child pornography charges

Earlier today in federal court in Minneapolis, a 52-year-old man pleaded guilty to producing sexually explicit photographs of two girls. Alec James Tafolla, of Claymont, Delaware, pleaded guilty to one count of production of child pornography before United States District Court Judge Ann D. Montgomery. He was indicted on January 11, 2011.

In his plea agreement, Tafolla admitted that beginning in September of 2010, he and a woman used two girls, who were both under the age of 12, to produce digital photographs of them engaging in sexually explicit conduct. He also admitted directing the woman to take several of the pictures using her cell phone. The woman then sent the photos to him via text message.

On April 12, 2011, the woman, Donna Mary Zauner, age 44, no known address, was indicted on one count of conspiracy to produce child pornography, two counts of production of child pornography and one count of distribution of child pornography.

Zauner's indictment alleges that from September to October of 2010, she induced and coerced the children to engage in such conduct, and on September 21 and October 4, 2010, she took photos of them with her cell phone. It also alleges that on September 21, Zauner sent a photo to Tafolla.

According to law enforcement affidavits filed in the cases, a Winona resident contacted police on October 6, 2010, to inform them of pornographic images of a young girl found on his computer. Previously, the man had been in a relationship with Zauner and had allowed her to live with him, beginning on September 9, 2010. However, on October 6, 2010, Zauner left his residence without notice. He checked his computer history in an attempt to find information about her whereabouts but, instead, came across an email account he did not recognize. He also

discovered an email sent from the account that contained a photograph of a girl engaged in sexually explicit conduct. Police determined the account belonged to Tafolla.

Later that night, authorities located Tafolla and Zauner in a Winona hotel. At that time, police recovered 23 additional sexually explicit photos from Zauner's cell phone. They further learned that in early September, Tafolla had driven Zauner from New York, where she lived, to Minnesota.

If convicted, Zauner faces a potential maximum penalty of 30 years in prison with a mandatory minimum penalty of 15 years on each production count, including the conspiracy, and 20 years with a mandatory minimum of five years on the distribution count. All sentences will be determined by a federal district court judge.

For his crime, Tafolla faces a potential maximum penalty of 30 years with a mandatory minimum penalty of 15 years. Judge Montgomery will determine his sentence at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled.

These cases are the result of an investigation by the Winona Police Department and the Minnesota Cyber Crimes Task Force, which is sponsored by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Secret Service. They are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Karen B. Schommer.

The U.S. Department of Justice is committed to combating the sexual exploitation of children, particularly via the Internet. For more information about these efforts, please visit the Department's Project Safe Childhood website, at www.projectsafefchildhood.gov.

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by a defendant. A defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.