



**United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney's Office
District of Minnesota**

**B. Todd Jones,
United States Attorney**

**Jeanne F. Cooney
Director of Community Relations
(612) 664-5611
email: jeanne.cooney@usdoj.gov**

News Release

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Man Charged in Operation Thin Ice Pleads Guilty to Possessing Child Pornography

Earlier today in federal court in Minneapolis, a 39-year-old Minneapolis man pleaded guilty to possessing approximately 5,000 images of child pornography. Appearing before United States District Court Chief Judge Michael J. Davis, Clare Richard Skjonsby pleaded guilty to one count of possession of child pornography. He was originally indicted on November 17, 2010, but agreed earlier today to be charged via an Information. In his plea agreement, Skjonsby admitted that on April 2, 2009, he knowingly possessed one or more items that contained visual depictions of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct.

This case resulted from Operation Thin Ice, a national law enforcement initiative that targeted subscribers of a hard-core child pornography website known as "Illegal.CP." Skjonsby was identified as a subscriber to that site during the course of the investigation. On April 2, 2009, a search warrant was executed at his residence, where authorities found a total of approximately 5,000 images of child pornography on multiple computers.

For his crime, Skjonsby faces a potential maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. Judge Davis will determine his sentence at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled.

This specific case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement – Homeland Security Investigations. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin S. Ueland.

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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