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THIRTY YEARS IN PRISON FOR FORMER FRESNO TEACHER FOR CHILD EXPLOITATION CONVICTIONS

FRESNO, Calif.—United States Attorney Benjamin B. Wagner announced today that Chief United States District Judge Anthony W. Ishii sentenced EPHRAIM JOE AGUIRRE II, 29, of Clovis, 30 years in prison to be followed by a lifetime term of supervised release for his conviction on two counts of receipt and distribution of child pornography. He must register as a sex offender and pay restitution to two victims depicted in the images.

This case was investigated by the Fresno Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, specifically the Clovis and Fresno Police Departments with assistance from United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Fresno.

According to Assistant United States Attorney David Gappa, who prosecuted the case, the Clovis Police Department began investigating AGUIRRE after it received information about his possible sexual abuse of a 17-year-old victim. AGUIRRE had been a teacher at elementary, middle, and high schools in Fresno. Investigators confirmed that AGUIRRE had engaged in multiple criminal sexual acts with a former student and gave the former student a laptop. Investigators recovered images of child pornography that AGUIRRE had downloaded to the laptop and had attempted to delete.

When investigators reviewed the contents of a second computer belonging to AGUIRRE, they learned that he had used it to trade child pornography with dozens of other people throughout the United States and abroad. AGUIRRE also engaged in numerous graphic chat sessions with many of these people. He expressed his sexual interest in children and claimed to have molested a four-year-old and a twelve-year-old-girl.

At sentencing Judge Ishii said that AGUIRRE “is a clear danger and threat to the public.”

AGUIRRE has been in custody since his initial appearance in federal court on December 1, 2008. He pleaded guilty on September 28, 2009.

“This sentence serves as a stern warning to other persons who possess and distribute child pornography and believe the anonymity of the Internet will shield them from detection,” said Paul Leonardi, resident agent in charge for ICE investigations in Fresno. “This case is particularly disturbing because the defendant used his position of authority to exploit innocent children, many of whom will bear the emotional scars of this trauma for the rest of their lives.”

This prosecution is part of the Department of Justice’s ongoing Project Safe Childhood initiative which was launched to increase federal prosecutions of sexual predators of children, and to reduce the number of Internet crimes against children including child pornography trafficking. As a part of PSC, the United States Attorney’s Office has teamed with state and local

agencies and organizations to increase law enforcement presence on the Internet, and to educate the public about safe Internet use, thereby reducing the risk that children might fall prey to online sexual predators. For additional information on the PSC initiative, please go to www.projectsafechildhood.gov or call the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of California and ask to speak with the PSC coordinator.

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