



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PROJECT SAFE CHILDHOOD

FORMER LACLEDE COUNTY JAILER PLEADS GUILTY TO RECEIVING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Matt J. Whitworth, Acting United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a former employee of the Laclede County Sheriff's Department pleaded guilty in federal court today to receiving child pornography over the Internet.

Martin Denson, 44, of Lebanon, Mo., pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Richard E. Dorr this morning to the charge contained in a March 31, 2009, federal indictment.

Denson, who was employed as a jailer for the Laclede County Sheriff's Department at the time of the offense, had been identified by federal law enforcement agents as a possible user of child pornography based upon a prior investigation.

When agents contacted **Denson** on June 24, 2008, at a motel in Lebanon where he was residing, they explained that they were investigating computer-related child pornography and there was reason to believe that he had purchased access to child pornography-related Web sites. **Denson** consented for the agents to seize his computer in order to conduct a computer forensic search for child pornography.

An examination of **Denson's** computer revealed 71 saved "favorite" sites that appeared to relate to teens, young kids and boys. Agents discovered more than 600 images of child pornography on **Denson's** computer. The majority of the images were of young boys between the ages of 6 to 11 years old with a few images ranging up to the mid-teens. The majority of the images were of prepubescent boys posing or engaged in sexually illicit contact with other boys or adult males.

Under federal statutes, **Denson** is subject to a mandatory minimum sentence of five years in federal prison without parole, up to 20 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$250,000. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after the completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Randall D. Eggert. It was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Laclede County, Mo., Sheriff's Department.

Project Safe Childhood

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow/index.html