



Department of Justice

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TEXAS MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ADVERTISING AND POSSESSING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

WASHINGTON – Mark Edwin Cairnes of Jonestown, Texas, pleaded guilty today to advertising and possessing child pornography, Assistant Attorney of the Criminal Division General Lanny A. Breuer and Acting U.S. Attorney John E. Murphy for the Western District of Texas announced.

Cairnes, 51, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Sam Sparks in Austin, Texas, to one count of advertising child pornography and one count of possession of child pornography. He was indicted on those charges on July 21, 2009. As part of his plea agreement, Cairnes admitted that he used an Internet bulletin board to seek out images of child pornography and possessed tens of thousands of images of child pornography, including images of children engaged in sadistic and masochistic conduct.

Cairnes was identified through “Operation Joint Hammer,” the U.S. component of an ongoing global enforcement operation targeting transnational rings of child pornographers. The operation has led to the arrest of more than 60 people in the United States involved in the trade of child pornography. Operation Joint Hammer was initiated through evidence developed by European law enforcement and shared with U.S. counterparts by Europol and Interpol. The European portion of this global enforcement effort, “Operation Koala,” was launched after the discovery of the activities of several people in Europe who were abusing children and producing photographs of the abuse for commercial gain. Further investigation unveiled a number of online child pornography rings.

Sentencing has been set for Dec. 18, 2009. At sentencing, Cairnes faces a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison for advertising child pornography and a maximum of 10 years in prison for possessing child pornography. He also faces forfeiture of all seized property, up to a \$250,000 fine and the possibility of a lifetime period of supervised release.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew B. Devlin of the Western District of Texas and Trial Attorney Alecia Riewerts Wolak of the Criminal Division’s Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section. The investigation is being handled by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

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