



Department of Justice

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JACKSONVILLE MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL CHARGE OF FAILURE TO REGISTER AS A SEX OFFENDER

Jacksonville, Florida - United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill announces today that Jeffery Ramon Highsmith (36, Jacksonville) has pleaded guilty to failing to register as sex offender, after traveling from Florida to North Carolina. Highsmith faces up to 10 years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine. Highsmith has been in custody since his arrest on January 19, 2010 in North Carolina. A sentencing date has not yet been set.

According to court documents, on February 27, 2006, in Flagler County, Florida, Highsmith was convicted of lewd and lascivious molestation of a child. Highsmith was sentenced to 24 months in prison and three years of sex offender probation following his incarceration. On May 25, 2007, Highsmith was released from custody, and on July 18, 2007, he registered as a convicted sex offender with the State of Florida. Florida sex offender registration requirements mandated that Highsmith re-register twice yearly. In connection with his sex offender probationary period, he was required to wear an electronic monitoring device. On December 19, 2009, Highsmith removed the electronic monitoring device and discarded it in downtown Jacksonville, thus violating the conditions of his release. He fled to North Carolina without first notifying local authorities in Jacksonville, in violation of his sex offender registration requirements. On January 19, 2010, Highsmith

was arrested in North Carolina by local law enforcement officers and the U.S. Marshals Service.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Marshals Service, the Macon County (North Carolina) Sheriff's Office, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and the Flagler County Sheriff's Office. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney D. Rodney Brown.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. 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.