



PRESS RELEASE

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**FORMER STATE PROBATION AND PAROLE SUPERVISOR PLEADS GUILTY TO
FEDERAL CHILD PORNOGRAPHY OFFENSE**

ALBUQUERQUE – This morning in federal court in Albuquerque, N.M., **Larry Franco**, 57, of Farmington, N.M., entered a guilty plea to receipt of a visual depiction of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct under a plea agreement with the U.S. Attorney’s Office. At the time that Franco committed the offense to which he pleaded guilty, he was the supervisor of the sex offender unit of the Probation and Parole Division of the New Mexico Corrections Department in Farmington.

Franco, who had been on conditions of release following his arrest on August 11, 2011, was ordered to surrender himself to the custody of the U.S. Marshal’s Service by 4:00 p.m. this afternoon. He will remain in federal custody pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled. At sentencing, Franco faces a minimum five years and a maximum 20 years of imprisonment to be followed by up to a lifetime of supervised release. Franco also will be required to register as a sex offender. Under the terms of his plea agreement, Franco is required to pay \$1000 in restitution to the child victim depicted in the pornography at issue in his crime of conviction, in addition to any other order of restitution or fine that the Court may impose.

Franco was charged in a six-count indictment charging him with child pornography offenses that was filed on August 9, 2011. The indictment charged Franco with two counts of receipt of visual depictions of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct (Counts 1 and 2), and four counts of possession of matter containing visual depictions of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct (Counts 3 through 6). During today’s plea hearing, Franco entered a guilty plea to Count 2 of the indictment. The remaining five counts of the indictment will be dismissed after Franco is sentenced.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Franco was arrested as a result of an undercover investigation by the Farmington Police Department (FPD) and the New Mexico Attorney General’s Office (NMAGO). According to Franco’s plea agreement, during the investigation, the FPD identified Franco’s Internet Protocol (IP) Address as an address that was being used to receive child pornography images and videos. On June 9, 2011, the FPD and

NMAGO executed a search warrant at Franco's residence and seized computers and computer-related media that contained child pornography images and videos.

In his plea agreement, Franco admitted that, while the search warrant was being executed at his residence, he voluntarily participated in a recorded interview. During the interview, Franco admitted that the computers in the residence were his and that he used a peer-to-peer file sharing program to download child pornography images and videos. Franco claimed that he did this because he was "inquisitive" and "wanted to know what [his] probationer clients were looking at." Although Franco claimed that he eventually deleted the images and videos from his computers, he admitted saving videos in a folder titled "movies." During the interview, Franco also admitted knowing that child pornography was illegal.

The plea agreement states that Franco sent an E-mail to the Parole and Probation Director for the New Mexico Corrections Department on June 10, 2011, in which he resigned from his position based on the child pornography recovered during the search of his residence. In the email, Franco stated that, "although my intentions in downloading these files was nothing more than to be able to know what to look for on offenders [SIC] computers, I cannot legally possess such items."

The case was investigated by the FPD and the NMAGO with assistance from the FBI, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Charlyn E. Rees. The case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, 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.

The case also was brought as part of the New Mexico Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force whose mission it is to locate, track, and capture Internet child sexual predators and Internet child pornographers in New Mexico. There are 61 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies associated with the Task Force, which is funded by a grant administered by the NMAGO. Anyone with information relating to suspected child predators and suspected child abuse is encouraged to contact federal or local law enforcement.

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