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Wilkes-Barre Man Sentenced to Five Years in Prison for Child Pornography and Firearms Charges

U.S. Attorney's Office
December 10, 2009

Middle District of Pennsylvania
(717) 221-4482

Dennis C. Pfannenschmidt, United States Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, announced that a 33-year-old Wilkes-Barre resident was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Senior Judge Richard P. Conaboy to serve 60 months in prison for receiving child pornography during January and February 2007, and unlawfully possessing a firearm as a user of a controlled substance during 2005 through 2007.

Pfannenschmidt stated that Jacob Mertz previously admitted to receiving sexually explicit images and videos of minors on his computer, and to possessing a firearm while he was a user of marijuana.

Mertz was originally indicted by a federal grand jury on January 22, 2008. A superseding indictment was returned by the grand jury on March 17, 2009. Mertz's charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Pennsylvania State Police, and Wilkes-Barre Police.

Judge Conaboy also ordered that Mertz be placed on 10 years of supervised release following his prison sentence; pay a fine of \$4,000; and pay a special assessment of \$200. Mertz was also ordered to undergo sex offender treatment and to comply with sex offender registration laws following his release from prison.

Pfannenschmidt noted that 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

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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.

Pfannenschmidt noted that the case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Francis P. Sempa.

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