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NEWS RELEASE

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GRAND VIEW MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO POSSESSION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Benjamin Allen Burnett, 32, of Grand View, Idaho, was sentenced late yesterday by Chief U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winmill to 84 months in federal prison, to be followed by lifetime supervised release after pleading guilty in United States District Court to possession of sexually explicit images of minors, the United States Attorney's Office announced.

The investigation began when agents of the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Idaho Internet Crimes Against Children Taskforce developed suspicion that activity involving sexually explicit images of minors had taken place using a Yahoo! email account assigned to Burnett. The investigation showed that Burnett's personal information and credit card data had been used to facilitate payments for memberships to commercial child pornography websites.

ICE Agents, assisted by Owyhee County Sheriff's deputies, U.S. Postal Inspectors, and investigators from the Idaho Attorney General's Office-Criminal Investigation Division, searched Burnett's home on October 28, 2008, and recovered computer media containing 112 sexually explicit images and 2 videos depicting prepubescent minors in various sexual acts. Investigators were able to identify fifteen minor victims of abuse depicted in 69 of the images. These images were produced in France, Switzerland, Germany, England, Sweden, Florida, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Illinois, and Washington State, and had been transmitted in interstate commerce by computer. Burnett told investigators that he began viewing child pornography when he was about age 20, and did so several times a week for more than a decade.

Psychiatric testimony presented during the day-long sentencing hearing yesterday revealed that Burnett is afflicted with Asperger's syndrome, an autism spectrum disorder, and has significant difficulties in social interaction, along with restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior and interests.

It was also revealed at the hearing that Burnett had molested four prepubescent minors in the early 1990's. He was adjudicated a juvenile delinquent at that time and provided treatment and placed on probation by the juvenile court in Elmore County.

"Today's prison sentence is a reminder of the serious crime that is committed when individuals use the Internet to sexually exploit innocent children by possessing images of child pornography," said Leigh Winchell, special agent in charge of ICE's Office of Investigation in Idaho. "ICE agents will continue to work tirelessly to identify these child predators and bring them to justice, one by one."

U.S. Attorney Tom Moss praised the cooperative work of the agents from ICE, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Idaho Attorney General's Office and Owyhee County Sheriff's Department. "The best way to stop this harmful and persistent crime of exploiting children is through excellent investigations and well-deserved prison sentences."

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