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FATHER AND SON PLEAD GUILTY TO PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

COLUMBUS -- Christopher Gould, 51, of Westerville pleaded guilty in United States District Court here today to one count of sexual exploitation of children by producing child pornography. His son, Adam Gould, 25, pleaded guilty on April 16, 2009 to one count of transportation of child pornography.

Gregory G. Lockhart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, Brian Moskowitz, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Westerville Police Chief Joseph Morbitzer announced the pleas entered before United States District Judge Edmund A. Sargus, Jr.

According to statements made during the plea hearings, ICE agents and Westerville police officers executed a federal search warrant at the Goulds' home on October 29, 2008. They seized a computer belonging to Christopher Gould and briefcase containing photographs of a then 10-year old girl in sexually explicit poses. Gould admitted that he had enticed the girl to pose for him that way while he took pictures. Forensic analysis of Christopher Gould's computer uncovered more than 30 sexually explicit images of the same juvenile and evidence that there had been other photos that he had deleted.

Agents also seized two laptop computers belonging to Adam Gould. Forensic examiners found more than 2,500 pictures and 78 movies of child pornography on the two computers. Adam Gould told investigators that he had been uploading and trading images of child pornography over the Internet for more than a year.

"Under the terms of the plea agreement, Christopher Gould will be sentenced to 180 months imprisonment and Adam Gould agreed to a sentence of 80 months imprisonment," Lockhart said, noting that the plea agreements also call for them to forfeit all the computer equipment they own. "Law enforcement officers patrolling the Internet are as crucial to our public safety as having officers patrolling our streets."

“All children have an absolute right to grow up free from the fear of sexual exploitation,” said Brian Moskowitz, special agent in charge of the ICE Office of Investigations for Michigan and Ohio. “ICE relentlessly pursues predators who sexually abuse children, whether that abuse is physical in nature or if it's accomplished by exploiting their images. Our agents will continue to police cyberspace to investigate and bring to justice those individuals who exploit the most vulnerable in our society, our children.”

This case is being brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In February 2006, the Attorney General launched Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorney's Offices around the country, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

Lockhart commended the cooperative investigation by ICE agents and Westerville police officers, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michael Hunter and Deborah Solove, who are prosecuting the case.

This case was also investigated under Operation Predator, which is a nationwide ICE initiative to protect children from sexual predators, including those who travel overseas for sex with minors, Internet child pornographers, criminal alien sex offenders, and child sex traffickers. Since Operation Predator was launched in July 2003, ICE agents have arrested more than 11,600 individuals.

ICE encourages the public to report suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE. This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators.

Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678 or <http://www.cybertipline.com>.

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