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FLORIDA MAN SENTENCED TO 42 MONTHS IN PRISON ON CHILD PORNOGRAPHY AND OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE CHARGES

WASHINGTON – Brian Thomas Smith, of Gainesville, Fla., was sentenced today to 42 months in prison and a lifetime of supervised release following his prison term for attempted possession of child pornography and obstruction of justice, announced Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Thomas F. Kirwin of the Northern District of Florida.

Smith, 38, pleaded guilty on March 2, 2010, before U.S. District Court Judge Stephan P. Mickle, in Gainesville, to a criminal information charging him with one count of attempted possession of child pornography and one count of obstruction of justice. According to his plea agreement, Smith admitted that he was a member of an Internet bulletin board where child pornography was posted and distributed and that he used a computer to attempt to possess and view images of child pornography as a member of that bulletin board. Smith also admitted in his plea agreement that he physically damaged his computers after being interviewed by law enforcement officers who informed Smith of a pending federal investigation related to the distribution of child pornography through the Internet. Smith admitted that he destroyed the computers with the intent to impede, obstruct or influence a pending investigation by a federal agency.

The case against Smith is a result of “Operation Nest Egg,” an ongoing and joint investigation led by the Criminal Division’s Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Indiana, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Operation Nest Egg, launched in February 2008, targeted more than 500 individuals located throughout the world for their involvement in an online group dedicated to trading images of child pornography. To date, as a result of Operation Nest Egg, more than 80 searches have been conducted in the United States. In total, more than 50 individuals have been arrested and 35 individuals have been convicted. Thus far, 16 child victims have been identified through Operation Nest Egg.

This 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 (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.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Francis T. Williams of the Northern District of Florida and CEOS Trial Attorney Alecia Riewerts Wolak. The investigation was conducted by ICE, with assistance provided by the North Florida Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Taskforce.

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