



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill
Middle District of Florida

Tampa	Orlando	Jacksonville	Ocala	Fort Myers
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE			CONTACT: WILLIAM DANIELS	
AUGUST 31, 2011			PHONE: (813) 274-6388	
http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/flm/pr			FAX: (813) 274-6300	

CONVICTED BRADFORD COUNTY SEX OFFENDER PLEADS GUILTY TO ATTEMPTED TRANSPORTATION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Jacksonville, Florida - United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill announced today that Rhymer Rhuebin Howell, Jr. (59, Starke) pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Jacksonville to a charge of attempted transportation of child pornography. Howell faces a mandatory minimum sentence of at least 15 years and up to 40 years in federal prison, a \$250,000 fine and a potential life term of supervised release. Howell has been in custody since his arrest on February 28, 2011, in Starke.

According to court documents, Howell has three prior convictions for sex offenses against children. In 1980, he was convicted of attempted sexual battery upon a child under the age of 11 years. In 1986, he was convicted of attempted lewd and lascivious conduct with a minor under the age of 16, and in 1989, he was convicted of lewd and lascivious conduct with a minor under the age of 16.

According to court documents, detectives in the Prince William County Police Department (Virginia) received a tip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) about a minor child in Virginia who was asked by an individual in a cell phone chat room to send naked pictures of himself to the individual. When interviewed, the boy stated that he sent approximately 20 naked pictures to this individual in exchange for \$200 in prepaid phone card credit. The individual maintained contact with the boy by

paying for additional minutes on the boy's cell phone via pre-paid phone cards. Subsequent investigation by the Bradford County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) in Starke, Florida identified this individual as Rhymer Rhuebin Howell, Jr.

According to court documents, on February 28, 2011, Howell made several attempts to send images of child pornography using his cellular telephone to another individual. On February 28, 2011, Howell received a text message on his cell phone from this individual requesting "good photos." Howell attempted to send images using the phone to this individual that depicted, among other things, prepubescent minor children engaged in sexually explicit conduct. Howell then attempted to send several more sexually explicit images, including two pornographic depictions of the same prepubescent minors. A few minutes later, BCSO detectives arrived at Howell's residence located at 1002 Butler Road in Starke and made contact with him.

According to court documents, Howell was later interviewed at the BCSO office. During the interview, he was shown correspondence that he sent to the minor child in Virginia. Howell admitted that he sent the boy a telephone card and a prepaid Visa card and eventually admitted that he knew that the boy was underage, and that the boy sent him some nude pictures. He admitted that there were pictures of children on his phone, and agreed that he had an attraction to children.

A search of Howell's cellular phone revealed over 200 images, mostly of little boys, and child pornography.

Forensic analysis of Howell's two cellular telephones revealed that they contained over 170 images depicting child pornography. A search of Howell's residence revealed, among other things, a student identification card belonging to a minor boy in Texas. Subsequent investigation revealed that Howell had befriended a minor child in Texas via

cell phone, and that the child had sent images of minors to Howell using a cell phone.

This case was investigated by the Bradford County Sheriff's Office, the Prince William County (Virginia) Police Department, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney D. Rodney Brown.

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 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.