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West Sacramento Man Sent to Prison for Child Porn
Yolo DA Reports Immediate Results for Federal Funding for Child Porn Cases

(Woodland, CA) - January 28, 2010 - District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced that, on Thursday, January 28, 2010, Judge Timothy L. Fall sentenced West Sacramentan Lou Earl Nelson, 29, to sixteen months in state prison for possessing child pornography. Mr. Nelson's recent possession of child pornography violated his probation on a 2006 felony conviction for possessing child pornography. This sentence came on the heels of the District Attorney's Office receiving federal grant funding for prosecuting these cases.

Nelson had been convicted of possessing child pornography in 2006 and had been placed on probation, which included being subject to search. In the fall of 2009, Nelson requested a modification of his probation terms and Yolo County Probation Officers conducted a routine search of his home. As part of the search, probation seized Nelson's desktop computer and turned it over to the District Attorney's Hi-Tech Crimes Unit. After considerable data analysis, Chief Investigator Pete Martin determined that the computer contained several, large encrypted media files. Whereas a password program merely locks a file, explained Chief Martin, encryption software literally transforms the entire file into an indecipherable code using a mathematical process. Chief Martin also found evidence that computer usage history and data had been erased and that both the encryption and erasing was done using programs designed to defeat law enforcement forensics. Notwithstanding these setbacks, Chief Martin was able to show that several child porn movies had been viewed on the computer. When confronted with this evidence, Nelson claimed that his brother borrowed the computer and accidentally downloaded the files. Nelson admitted that the encrypted files may contain child porn, although he claimed not to have the encryption "key" to decipher the files. Nelson's brother denied ever having borrowed the computer.

Judge Fall concluded that Nelson violated his probation for possessing child porn. At sentencing, Nelson's attorney argued for leniency, claiming that Nelson was capable of complying with probation and that he was a "low functioning" individual. "Mr. Nelson is not low functioning," countered Deputy District Attorney Ryan Couzens. "He concocted a sophisticated story to attempt to shift blame to others and used advanced computer programs to cover his trail," explained Couzens. Judge Fall ultimately sentenced Mr. Nelson to sixteen months in state prison.

"Child pornography crimes lurk behind a shadow of technology, and require special people and tools to prosecute," commented District Attorney Jeff Reisig. Reisig explained that recent funding received under the Child Sexual Predator Program Grant will improve his office's efforts to prosecute this type of sexual exploitation of children. "We are proud to report this success so soon after receiving funding," said Reisig.

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