



## U.S. Department of Justice

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### NEWS RELEASE

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### **ILLINOIS MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ATTEMPTED ENTICEMENT OF MINOR**

Michael Lee Stewart, 36, of Mahomet, Illinois, pleaded guilty yesterday in U.S. District Court in Boise, Idaho, to attempted enticement of a minor, U.S. Attorney Wendy J. Olson announced.

According to the plea agreement, the investigation into Stewart began in early December 2010 when family members of a 15-year-old Boise girl reported to Boise Police that the girl had struck up an inappropriate online relationship with Stewart. In a conversation between the girl and Stewart in November 2010, the girl indicated she was 15 years old. Over time, Stewart's online relationship with the girl became more and more personal. Stewart bought the girl a flute and mailed it to her, and sent her gift cards to buy personal items. On November 30, 2010, while chatting online, Stewart and the girl discussed the possibility of meeting and described how their conversations were making him sexually aroused. He described sexual acts he would like to perform on the girl.

After it was reported to Boise Police, Stewart continued for the next three months to regularly send messages over the Internet and by cellular telephone from Illinois to Idaho. The messages included language expressing a desire to have a sexual relationship with the girl.

Over time, Stewart spoke of having the girl come to see him. Stewart eventually bought a plane ticket for the girl to travel from Boise to Indianapolis, Indiana, to arrive on March 3, 2011. That evening, a female undercover officer, posing as the girl, called Stewart and told him she was in the Denver airport en route to Indianapolis. Stewart said he would pick her up at the airport.

Investigators verified that Stewart checked into a hotel where he had made reservations for a one night stay, requesting a room with a Jacuzzi.

Stewart was waiting at the Indianapolis airport on March 3, 2011, when the plane arrived. Investigators saw him watch the passengers deplane. After the girl did not get off the plane, Stewart went to the ticket agent and said he was supposed to pick up a minor. At that point, law enforcement officers contacted Stewart. Stewart was later interviewed.

Investigators obtained a search warrant for the hotel room Stewart rented. Inside they found the room stocked with condoms, lubricant, a bottle of wine, two wine glasses, jewelry, a bra and panties, and a bathrobe. Investigators also found a lap top computer, a cell phone, and a digital camera.

Stewart was transported to Idaho in March to face federal criminal charges. He waived indictment and was charged in a two count information filed with the court on May 26, 2011. As part of his plea, Stewart agreed to forfeit items used in the offense, including the computer, camera and telephone.

The charge carries a maximum punishment of ten years to life imprisonment, a fine of up to \$250,000, and minimum of five years supervised release. Sentencing is scheduled for September 13, 2011, in Boise.

The case was investigated by the Idaho Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC), United States Postal Inspection Service, the Boise Police Department, and the Idaho Sex Offender Watch Task Force, in conjunction with U.S. Attorney's Offices for the Southern District of Indiana and the Central District of Illinois.

Olson praised the cooperative efforts of the agencies involved in the investigation. "This case underscores the collaborative efforts of federal, state and local law enforcement to combat sexual exploitation of our children," said Olson. "We will continue to use every available resource and work together to apprehend and prosecute offenders who prey on children via the Internet."

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. 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, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit [www.projectsafechildhood.gov](http://www.projectsafechildhood.gov).

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