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FORMER QUEENS RESIDENT CHARGED WITH INTERNET SEX CRIMES
INVOLVING YOUNG GIRLS IN TWO STATES

Faces Up To 15 Years In Prison

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a former Queens resident now living in Connecticut has been charged with child endangerment for having engaged in sexually explicit electronic communications with three young girls – all of whom are between 9 and 14 years of age – in Massachusetts and Illinois.

District Attorney Brown said, “The charges are very disturbing. There is a national connection to this case which frighteningly shows the far reach of the Internet and the ease in which sexual predators can gain access to young children. This case should serve as a clear and unmistakable warning that law enforcement is prepared to apprehend and prosecute sexual predators who betray and defile youngsters and that parents need to closely monitor their children’s Internet access and activities.”

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Philip Hawthorne, 27, of 746 West Thames Street in Norwich, CT. Hawthorne, who is unemployed, formerly lived at 140 Beach 123rd Street and 224 Beach 97th Street, both in Rockaway Park, Queens. He is presently awaiting arraignment in Queens Criminal Court in Kew Gardens on a 20-count criminal complaint, charging him with three counts of use of a child in a sexual performance, fourteen counts of promoting a sexual performance by a child and three counts of endangering the welfare of a child. If convicted, he faces up to fifteen years in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the charges, Hawthorne began communicating with a 13-year-old Massachusetts girl in November 2007 on an Internet social networking site by using the screen name “ballin4lyfe1237@aim.com” and pretending to be a 16-year-old Boston teenager named Keith. It is alleged that during the course of their conversations, the girl provided “Keith” with personal information – such as where she resided and went to school, and the names of her parents – and, in turn, Hawthorne convinced the girl to send him naked pictures of herself, as well as a video of herself and her nine-year-old sister in which they were both naked and exhibiting their genital and anal areas.

It is further alleged that, beginning in February 2008, Hawthorne electronically communicated with a 14-year-old Illinois girl by assuming the persona of “Keith Singleton,” a 16-year-old boy who played on the football team of a nearby high school. It is alleged that they communicated on a number of social networking sites – including “buddypic (his user name:

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tombi),” “teenspot (his user names: tombi69 and tombi)” and “myspace (his user name: ballin)” – and by instant messaging – in which his screen name was “ballin4lyfe1237.” During their instant message conversations, Hawthorne allegedly was able to get her to relate personal information about herself and her family and convince her that he wanted a relationship with her but that she would have to take nude pictures of herself and send them to him – which she did. Hawthorne then allegedly requested that she make a video of herself taking off her clothes and show her genital area. After she had made the video but refused to send it to the defendant, Hawthorne allegedly began threatening her by telling her that if she did not send the video he would send the other sexually explicit pictures to her school and her parents, post them online and that she would be arrested.

On July 2, 2008, a court-authorized search warrant was executed at 224 Beach 97th Street – the defendant’s last known address and the residence of his mother. During questioning, she allegedly admitted that her son, Philip Hawthorne, had moved out – taking his computer and external storage media with him – in May 2008 after being visited by FBI agents. Mrs. Hawthorne also allegedly admitted that Philip Hawthorne had previously lived at 140 Beach 123rd Street and now lived at his father’s residence in Norwich, Connecticut.

The defendant was arrested at approximately 7:00 p.m. on July 2, 2008, at his father’s Norwich residence. He waived extradition and was returned yesterday to New York.

District Attorney Brown expressed his appreciation to the Weymouth (MA) Police Department, the Rock Island County (IL) Sheriff’s Department and the Norwich (CT) Police Department for their assistance and cooperation during the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Andrew Jackson and other members of the New York City Police Department’s Computer Crime Squad under the supervision of Sergeant Felix Rivera and Lieutenant Dennis Lane and the overall supervision of Chief Jeremiah Quinlan, of the NYPD’s Special Investigations Division, and by Detective George Choy, of the District Attorney’s Detective Bureau, under the supervision of Sergeant John W. Kenna, and under the overall supervision of Lawrence J. Festa, Chief Investigator, and Albert D. Velardi, Deputy Chief Investigator.

Senior Assistant District Attorney Kateri A. Gasper, of the District Attorney’s Special Proceedings Bureau, is prosecuting the case, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Robert D. Alexander, Chief of the Computer Crime Unit, and under the overall supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Alexander, Anthony M. Communiello, Chief of the District Attorney’s Special Proceedings Bureau, and Oscar W. Ruiz, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Linda M. Cantoni.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editor: E-version of this press release posted at www.queensda.org.