

## Former border agent sentenced to two years in prison

By *BRIANNA LUSK*, Staff Writer

A former El Centro Sector U.S. Border Patrol agent was sentenced to two years in prison and five years probation Monday in San Diego court after he pleaded guilty to one count of possession of child pornography.

Anthony Ventura, 29, of Imperial will be required to register as a sex offender for the rest of his life.

Ventura pleaded guilty in June to a count of possession of child pornography after he was alleged to have possessed at least two sexually explicit images of a minor girl on his computer.

Ventura faced up to 10 years in prison for the federal charge.

The case against Ventura began earlier this year when he was arrested in El Centro after allegedly attempting to seduce the 13-year-old daughter of a co-worker via the Internet.

The images were discovered on his computer after law enforcement authorities searched his house in February.

He has pleaded not guilty to state charges stemming from that arrest, including attempting to molest a child younger than 14.

The prosecution of the state charges is ongoing.

The investigation of Ventura began when the mother of the alleged victim reported her daughter was communicating with a man via the popular Internet Web site myspace.com.

Agents posing as the young girl arranged a meeting at a local convenience store where Ventura was taken into custody.

The electronic images that are unrelated to the alleged minor victim were recovered during the investigation of the state charges.

The federal case against Ventura was part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse.

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