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NEWS

Jury finds man guilty in teen-sex sting case

By

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A former Navy physicist standing trial for the second time on charges that he used the Internet to try to seduce a teen-age girl was convicted yesterday after a federal jury in Baltimore rejected the defendant's claim that he was engaged merely in an online sexual fantasy.

Jurors also found George Paul Chambers, 46, guilty of possessing child pornography.

Chambers originally stood trial in December 2002, becoming the first defendant in Maryland's federal courts to contest such charges with the argument that he was only role-playing when he exchanged sexually graphic e-mails and photographs with an undercover FBI agent who assumed the online identity of a 13-year-old cheerleader.

The first trial ended in a mistrial after the jury deadlocked, a rare setback for the FBI's \$10 million Innocent Images program, which works to track and thwart online child predators. Jurors in Chambers' second trial, heard before U.S. District Judge Marvin J. Garbis, deliberated less than six hours before reaching a guilty verdict.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Ari S. Casper told jurors in his closing arguments to reject Chambers' fantasy claims, saying the game ended when the defendant went to a prearranged meeting with a person he believed was a minor.

"If you fantasize about going to Ocean City, Maryland, it's a fantasy," Casper said. "When you get in your car and drive there, it's reality."

Chambers, a former Neumann design engineer from La Plata in Charles County and the father of two young daughters, could be