



# Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2008  
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AG  
(202) 514-2007  
TDD (202) 514-1888

## **DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE ANNOUNCES ONGOING GLOBAL ENFORCEMENT EFFORT TARGETING CHILD PORNOGRAPHERS**

### ***Operation Highlights Increased Law Enforcement Cooperation Between United States and European Union***

WASHINGTON – Today, Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey, speaking after a joint United States and European Union (EU) ministerial meeting, highlighted “Operation Joint Hammer” – the U.S. component of an ongoing global enforcement operation targeting transnational rings of child pornographers. The operation already has led to the arrest of more than 60 people in the United States involved in the trade of child pornography; a number that the Attorney General remarked was likely to increase. Thus far, 11 child victims have been identified through Operation Joint Hammer.

“It should come as news to no one that crimes against children have been an area of special focus for the Department of Justice, and an area of great success,” said Attorney General Mukasey. “Through initiatives such as Project Safe Childhood, we have increased prosecutions of those who abuse and exploit children by over 30 percent in the last two years. Through a series of national media campaigns, we have made great strides in making parents and young people aware of the dangers. And most important, through cooperation with other law enforcement agencies such as our partners in the European Union, we have identified – and in many cases, saved – hundreds of children depicted in images and videos of sexual abuse.”

Operation Joint Hammer was initiated through evidence developed by European law enforcement and shared with U.S. counterparts by Europol and Interpol. The European portion of this global enforcement effort, “Operation Koala,” was launched after the discovery of a handful of people in Europe who were molesting children and producing photographs of that abuse for commercial gain. Further investigation unveiled a number of online child pornography rings – some of which hosted dangerous offenders who not only traded child pornography, but who themselves sexually abused children.

In one case, European law enforcement officials discovered that a father was raping his young daughters and offering a photographer across the continent an opportunity to photograph these sexual attacks. Identification of the father led to the discovery of a commercial Web site maintained by the photographer, which he used to sell the images of the sexual abuse of those children along with many other images of

other children whose sexual exploitation he commissioned. Law enforcement has determined that the customers of the Web site were located in nearly 30 countries around the world, including the United States.

Eurojust and Europol brought together law enforcement officers from many of the affected countries, including the United States, to share information about possible customers of the Web site located in their countries and to coordinate enforcement actions against these child pornographers. With close cooperation from European law enforcement, U.S. law enforcement has been able to identify a number of the U.S.-based customers of the Web site. Further investigation into those targets resulted in the identification of a number of Internet-based trading sites dedicated to the sharing of child pornography. A number of the U.S. targets belonged to more than one site, revealing an inter-connected web of underground child pornography trading.

“Operation Joint Hammer illustrates the effectiveness of international cooperation and the speed with which we can move to protect children, identify those who prey on them and bring them to justice,” said John P. Torres, Acting Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). “Those who produce, distribute and buy images of child pornography cause more children to be damaged. As a member of the Virtual Global Taskforce, ICE works globally every day to stop this from happening.”

“This case is an extraordinary example of the good and important cooperation between U.S. and E.U. law enforcement. Together we have made results to the disadvantage of evil child molesters and to the benefit of a large number of innocent victims,” said Max-Peter Ratzel, Director of Europol.

“The Internet has connected all of us into one world without oceans and boundaries,” said Shawn Henry, FBI Cyber Division Assistant Director. As a result, cyber crimes present a challenge that can only be effectively confronted with strength and dedication exhibited daily by law enforcement agencies around the world working in close coordination. As today’s announcement demonstrates, we are making significant progress. We are proud to be partners in Operation Joint Hammer and I commend the many law enforcement personnel who contributed to its success.”

“The Postal Inspection Service is proud to have participated in this multi-agency initiative,” said U.S. Postal Inspection Chief Postal Inspector William R. Gilligan. “Through Operation Joint Hammer, those who used the Internet and the U.S. mails to traffic in child pornography were identified; huge amounts of child pornography have been seized; scores of individuals have been arrested, and, most importantly, many children have been rescued from further sexual abuse and exploitation.”

To date, U.S. law enforcement, including federal, state and local authorities, have through close cooperation, filed numerous charges, and more are expected as investigations continue. Significantly, a number of the child pornography traders identified through this operation had been sexually abusing children themselves,

sometimes producing images of their sexual abuse. Thus far, work by U.S. law enforcement has resulted in the identification of 11 child victims.

Operation Joint Hammer is the result of close coordination between the FBI, DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the Department of Justice's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), along with European law enforcement, including Europol and Eurojust. In addition, numerous U.S. Attorneys' Offices, as well as CEOS trial attorneys, have been handling the prosecution of the targets identified by these numerous investigations.

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