

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102



Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney

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Assistant U.S. Attorneys

MARK J. McCARREN

973-645-2867

PAUL B. MATEY

973-645-2930

emis.rel

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More than 125 Arrested in Nationwide Child Pornography Investigation

(More)

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J. Gregory Reinert, PAO

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NEWARK – More than 125 individuals have been arrested nationwide, including 17 in New Jersey, on charges for subscribing to websites depicting hardcore child pornography involving children as young as infants engaged in sexual activities with adults, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie and Immigration and Customs Enforcement Special-Agent-in-Charge Kyle Hutchins announced today.

Many of the defendants were arrested this morning on Criminal Complaints and Indictments which have been unsealed throughout the country.

The nationwide arrests stem from an investigation known as Operation Emissary, which was initiated by the New Jersey offices of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey. The investigation focused on a commercial website offering access to videos and images of hardcore child pornography. The website, which was accessible via the Internet, alerted would-be subscribers that subscribing to the website was illegal and warned them to be discreet about their purchase. The arrests represent individuals who subscribed to the website over a period of approximately 2 to 3 months at the end of 2005 and early 2006. Arrests have been made in more than 22 states to date. In addition, more than 225 search warrants have been executed on the personal computers of individual subscribers, and dozens of additional arrests are expected as that evidence is reviewed.

The arrests include a significant number of individuals who have been previously convicted of sex offenses against minors, and have led to the discovery of individuals who have been actively molesting children. More than one dozen convicted sex offenders have been arrested to date. Among the defendants that have been arrested who have been convicted of sex offenses against minors or against whom evidence has been recovered regarding molestations that have yet to culminate in a conviction are the following:

- Michael Norris, Vancouver, WA: A former camp counselor/medical assistant at a Bible camp as well as a former lay youth minister at a church, Norris admitted to sexually abusing at least four children and manufacturing pornographic images of at least two of them when ICE agents executed a search warrant at his residence to seize his computer.
- Genaro Vela, Mission, TX: Vela, a longtime Scout Leader and middle school coach, was found in possession of more than 4,000 images and videos of child pornography pursuant to the Operation Emissary lead. Vela was arrested the day after the search by the Mission Police Department for the aggravated sexual assault of two minors. The state charges are pending, but Vela pled guilty to federal charges for receiving child pornography on or about September 5, 2006. Sentencing on the federal charges remains pending.

- Martin Dolamore, San Diego, CA: During the execution of the Operation Emissary search warrant, Dolamore admitted to molesting at least eight children over a period of 30 years. Dolamore described his strategy for selecting his targets for molestation and claimed to be very proficient at pinpointing vulnerable children. He also indicated that he had traveled overseas to have sex with children in the Philippines.
- Wendell Newkirk, Jr., Fairdale, KY: Upon execution of the Operation Emissary search warrant, agents found Newkirk to be in possession of hundreds of images of child pornography, including numerous printed images, printouts of stories relating to pedophilia and incest. Newkirk had been convicted in 1997 for rape and sodomy of a girl under the age of 12 and sentenced to three years' imprisonment.
- Klifford Rose, Saramento, CA: Rose admitted to purchasing access to multiple child pornography websites. He was also found in possession of a handheld video camera with a videotape depicting him sexually assaulting an 8-year old girl. As a result, Rose was arrested and charged with 8 counts of Lewd Acts on a Child Under the Age of 13, under California state law.
- David Troglin, Kingman, AZ. Troglin had been previously convicted in the State of Idaho for the molestation of two 9-year old girls. Upon execution of the Operation Emissary search warrant, Troglin was found to be in possession of at least 450 child pornography images and videos.
- Robert Shaffer, Bethlehem, PA: Shaffer, who was found in possession of more than 100 images and videos of child pornography, has two prior convictions for sex offenses. One of those convictions related to the rape of a 10-year old girl.
- Donald Wilson, Midland, TX: Wilson, who had been previously convicted of a sexual offense against a minor, was found in possession of numerous images of child pornography. Upon entering his residence, ICE agents discovered that he had framed some of these images and hung them on his bedroom wall and used an image of child pornography for the screensaver on his computer.

Due to the assessment that these individuals posed a high-risk to the community, each was arrested at the time that the searches were conducted or shortly thereafter.

Today, 14 people were arrested or surrendered in New Jersey as part of the wider investigation targeting individual subscribers to hard-core child pornography internet sites connected to Operation Emissary. They and another three suspects already charged were found during the course of the investigation to have possessed or received child pornography on their home or work computers. Initial court appearances will be occurring at 2:30 p.m.

before U.S. Magistrate Judge Madeline Cox Arleo in Newark.

Arrests in New Jersey have included a Hi-Nella police officer, a Customs and Border Protection officer and a clinical researcher for a pharmaceutical company. Defendants arrested outside of New Jersey have included police officers, military personnel, corrections officers and high school teachers.

"Our intention is to attack child pornography at all levels – including the demand that fuels the market in child exploitation," Christie said. "This case should clearly demonstrate to those pedophiles who believe that the Internet provides them with anonymity, that they are clearly mistaken. The Internet has a global reach, but so do we." Christie added that "the significant numbers of convicted child molesters and other individuals who appear to have molested children who have been arrested as part of Operation Emissary should make clear that there is a substantial and disturbing link between those who pay for access to child pornography on the Internet and those who victimize children."

"As this investigation amply illustrates, there is no safe haven for child sex predators. The Internet does not serve to insulate those who would consume and collect the images of children being sexually assaulted and exploited, and we will track you down," said Hutchins.

"Among those arrested, we identified numerous individuals who were sex offenders, child molesters or had access to children," said Julie L. Myers, Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement. "It is particularly troubling when we find individuals who not only trade in images of the exploitation of children online, but attempt to exploit children offline as well."

(The names and charges of the New Jersey defendants arrested today or surrendered today appear as an addendum to this news release.)

Despite being charged in a Criminal Complaint or Indictment, every defendant is presumed innocent, unless and until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, following a trial at which the defendant has all of the trial rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and federal law.

Christie credited Special Agents of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, under the direction of Kyle Hutchins, in Newark. Christie also thanked Mastercard and VISA for their cooperation and assistance in the investigation.

The United States is represented in this matter by Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark J. McCarren, Chief of the Public Protection Unit in the Criminal Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul Matey, also of the Public Protection Unit.

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New Jersey Defendants

Each of the following New Jersey defendants was arrested or surrendered today or were charged in recent weeks as part of the Operation Emissary investigation. Each was charged either with possession of child pornography or receipt of child pornography, the distinction being that some defendants may or may not have possessed the images on their computers at the time of arrest.

A conviction for possession of child pornography under 18 U.S.C. 2252A(a)(5)(B) carries a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. A conviction for receipt of child pornography carries with it a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years imprisonment, and a 5 year mandatory minimum sentence.

Individuals who have a prior sexual offense conviction involving a minor or a prior child pornography-related offense conviction face a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years if convicted of possession and a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years if convicted of receipt. After their initial appearances, the defendants' cases would next be presented to a grand jury for potential indictment on those charges.

Layne Bracht, 24, of Matawan, former administrative special police officer; voluntary surrender.

Michael Brown, 51, of Jersey City, grocery store clerk; arrested.

Matthew Dulak, 20, of Marlton, automotive technician; voluntary surrender.

Jason Faccibene, 32, of Hoboken, telecommunications professional; voluntary surrender.

Brian Fahey, 26, of Stockton, former computer inventory supervisor; arrested

Gary Hale, 49, of Egg Harbor City, cook; arrested.

Corey Harris, 19, of Voorhees, student; arrested.

Gene Knorr, 25, of Sewell, carpenter; arrested.

Stephen Lasher, 49, of Verona, clinical researcher, pharmaceuticals; voluntary surrender.

Albert Montemayor, 66, of Pitman, former County activities director, retired; arrested.

William Morehouse, 63, of Kearny, medical supply representative; arrested.

George Payne, 34, of Hoboken, manager of information technology; voluntary surrender.

Micah Reagor, 29, of Jersey City, chef; arrested.

Domingo Santos, 40, of Landing, hospital maintenance; arrested.

Charged in June, July and August:

Jonathan Burke, 37, of Keyport, private security officer; arrested on June 5, 2006; released on \$100,000 bond.

Vincent Gambale, 43, of Deptford, Customs and Border Protection Officer, Department of Homeland Security; self-surrendered on August 8, 2006; released on \$50,000 bond.

Sean McMichael, 23, of Voorhees, former police patrolman, resigned; self-surrendered on August 3, 2006; released on \$100,000 bond.