



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Northern District of New York*

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NEWS RELEASE

United States Attorney Richard S. Hartunian announced that LEON YINGST, 56, of the Town of Van Buren, made his initial appearance today in United States District Court in Syracuse, having been charged in a criminal complaint with the federal crimes of receiving and possessing child pornography obtained by him over the Internet.

The federal criminal complaint filed charges that an investigation by the New York State Police found that the Internet Protocol (IP) address assigned to YINGST's residence was linked to child pornography images. Further investigation confirmed that YINGST had been downloading images and videos depicting child pornography from the Internet, and an initial forensic examination of one piece of media seized from him uncovered a collection of 341 video files and 2,743 image files containing child pornography.

YINGST is being held without bail pending a detention hearing scheduled for Thursday, April 7th before United States Magistrate Judge Andrew T. Baxter.

On the charge of receiving child pornography over the Internet, YINGST faces a maximum penalty of 20 years, and a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years in federal prison. The possession charge carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in federal prison. Both charges carry a fine of up to \$250,000, and a term of supervised release of a minimum of 5 years, and up to life, following any term of incarceration imposed. In addition, if convicted of either charge YINGST would be required to register as a sex offender.

YINGST's arrest was the result of an investigation by the New York State Police Computer Crime Unit, with assistance from the United States Secret Service. This joint investigation is a part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov/.

The charges are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Lisa Fletcher, who can be reached at 448-0672.