

Department of Justice

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Western District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPTEMBER 12, 2012
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MICHIGAN MAN CHARGED WITH CYBERSTALKING AND ATTEMPTED SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINOR VICTIMS

BUFFALO, N.Y.— U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that James S. Allen, 36, of New Baltimore, MI, has been arrested and charged by Criminal Complaint with cyberstalking, trafficking in computer passwords, and making harassing telephone calls. The charges carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Aaron J. Mango, who is handling the case, stated that according to Complaint, between June 24, 2012 and August 14, 2012, the defendant utilized the internet and text messages to communicate with at least 10 female victims in the Western District of New York, many of them minors, in an effort to obtain pornographic pictures of the minors. The Complaint alleges that Allen would contact the victims and tell them that he found naked pictures of them on the internet. The defendant then directed the victims to a specific website to view the pictures. In reality, the website was a front by which the defendant sought to surreptitiously obtain the victim's private e-mail address and password – such a site is sometimes referred to by law enforcement as a “phishing” website.

Once the targeted victim input the requested information, the victim's personal e-mail addresses and passwords went straight to the defendant via the internet. The defendant thereafter seized control of the victim's e-mail accounts, contacted the victims, and threatened that if they did not engage in a Skype video chat with him, he would distribute naked photos of the victims over the internet. Once a victim and the defendant logged onto Skype (the defendant utilized the screen name “shhh.shhh”), Allen demanded that the victims take their clothes off and engage in sexual conduct, with the further threat that naked pictures of them would be sent out to all of Western New York if the girl did not comply. As a result of the defendant's repeated and sustained harassment of the victims, many victims suffered substantial emotional distress.

The defendant was arrested this morning at his home in New Baltimore, Michigan. Allen will appear in Federal Court in Michigan for a detention hearing on September 17, 2012. Following those proceedings, an appearance will be scheduled in the Western District of New York.

“This case is another example of why it is imperative for parents to be vigilant in monitoring the computer usage of their children, and for any user of the internet – including children – to be aware of some of the threats which exist online” said U.S. Attorney Hochul. “In general, do not provide personal identifying information over the internet unless the website is already known to be trustworthy. Further tips regarding online safety can be found by visiting www.netismartz.org or www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/parent-guide. Finally, if you believe that you or someone you know may have had contact with the defendant, or a user on Skype with the screen name “shhh.shhh,” please call the U.S. Attorney’s Office at 1-800-320-0682 and leave a message with your contact information.”

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by United States Attorneys’ Offices and the Criminal Division’s Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), 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.projectsafchildhood.gov.

The arrest is the culmination of an investigation on the part of Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Christopher M. Piehota, Special Agent in Charge.

The fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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