



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Joseph H. Hogsett  
Southern District of Indiana

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CONTACT: TIM HORTY  
(317) 229-2409; Cell (317) 716-4250  
tim.horty@usdoj.gov

## HOGSETT ANNOUNCES SENTENCING OF AUSTRALIAN MAN IN PROSECUTION OF INTERNATIONAL CHILD EXPLOITATION CONSPIRACY

*Pair traveled worldwide to orchestrate abuse, videos of which were trafficked in Indiana*

### PRESS RELEASE

INDIANAPOLIS – Joseph H. Hogsett, the United States Attorney, announced this morning the sentencing of an Australian man who exploited a young boy in a scheme that stretched across three continents. Peter Truong, age 36, an Australian citizen, along with previously-sentenced defendant Mark J. Newton, age 42, an American citizen living in Australia, orchestrated the abuse of the young child at the hands of a number of other men around the world. In a hearing before U.S. District Judge Sarah Evans Barker, Truong was sentenced to 30 years in prison.

“This young child endured a nightmare that stretched over one year and three continents, including some of the most heinous acts of exploitation that this office has ever seen,” Hogsett said. “Through the tireless work of our Project Safe Childhood team, this child has been rescued and these men are facing what amounts to effective life sentences.”

Newton and Truong, who were living in Queensland, Australia, were the legal parents of a boy (“Victim 1”) who was five to six years of age during the events described in the federal charges. Between 2010 and 2011, Newton and Truong traveled to the United States, and elsewhere, with Victim 1 to meet with other men, allegedly including John R. Powell, age 41, a resident of Florida, and Jason Bettuo, age 36, a resident of Illinois, so that these persons could use high definition digital cameras to record the sexual abuse of Victim 1.

These instances allegedly included a September 2010 meeting with Powell, in which Newton and Truong allowed him to engage in sexual conduct with Victim 1 and produce child pornography of the encounter. In April 2011, they traveled with Victim 1 to San Francisco, at which time Powell and Bettuo allegedly engaged in sexual conduct with the child and produced additional child pornography.

On one occasion, Newton and Truong allowed a man, allegedly Powell, to travel to Australia and visit them at their home. During this visit, Powell was given access to Victim 1 and would allegedly sexually exploit the child and create child pornography. Court documents also indicate that Newton and Truong traveled to France for a “vacation” on at least one occasion, inviting Powell to meet with them who then engaged in sexual conduct with Victim 1, which was again video recorded. The child pornography was then brought back to the United States.

Over the course of this scheme to sexually exploit Victim 1, Newton and Truong were also found to have engaged in a conspiracy to transport the child pornography produced during these encounters to individuals around the world, including individuals in Anderson, Indiana, and Arlington, Virginia. Powell is also alleged to have participated in this scheme. It was this trafficking of materials that alerted United States Postal Inspectors and Indiana investigators to the case, launching the two year investigation of Newton, Truong, Bettuo, and others.

This case is the result of the investigative efforts of the United States Postal Inspection Service to target individuals who use the US Mail and the Internet to sexually exploit children. They were assisted locally by the Indiana Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, and received significant help from the Queensland Police Service, Task Force Argos in Australia.

According to Senior Litigation Counsel Steven D. DeBrotta and Assistant U.S. Attorney A. Brant Cook, who along with the Criminal Division’s Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section Trial Attorney Michael Grant are prosecuting these cases for the government, Truong was also sentenced to 10 years of federally-supervised release. Prosecutors said that defendant Bettuo has filed a petition in federal court expressing his intent to enter a plea of guilty, and Powell’s case is still pending as he awaits trial.

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. Hogsett pointed out that in the last Project Safe Childhood reporting year, the U.S. Attorney’s Office prosecuted 52 defendants in Indiana, an increase of 37% over the prior year, and 49 defendants were convicted and sentenced.

The greatest measure of the PSC program’s impact, however, is the identification and rescue of child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. Over the last year, the U.S. Attorney’s Office successfully identified more than 120 child victims, including minors in Indiana, numerous places in the United States, Canada, Switzerland, and other countries around the world.

Led nationally by United States Attorneys’ Offices and the Criminal Division’s Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, 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](http://www.projectsafechildhood.gov).

An Information or Indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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