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JURY FINDS MEN GUILTY OF CHILD EXPLOITATION ENTERPRISE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, October 09, 2014

MISSOULA - On October 9, 2014 two men were found guilty of participating in a child exploitation enterprise and a conspiracy to advertise child pornography. Joshua Peterson, 45, of Prescott, Arizona, and Steven Grovo, 35, of Shirley, Massachusetts, were accused by a federal grand jury in Montana of promoting the sexual exploitation of children using an international online bulletin board where members advertised, distributed, viewed and received images depicting child pornography. Both men are being detained pending their January 22, 2015 sentencing in Missoula.

The government presented evidence that In November 2009, an early participant in the conspiracy designed and created an online bulletin board which allowed the board members to share in their common interest in exchanging files on line which contained child pornography and non-child pornography images. As the conspiracy progressed, additional members contributed to the design and operations of the board. Between November 6, 2009, through March 19, 2012, Peterson and Grovo and the others used the online bulletin board to share pictures and videos of children engaged in sexually explicit conduct. During that same time the participants agreed to use the online bulletin board to publish or print notices or advertisements soliciting additional images of child pornography which they would then share and broadcast on the internet.

The lengthy and wide ranging investigation, referred to as Operation Kingdom Conqueror, is an ongoing cooperative effort between the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Montana Department of Criminal Investigations, the Helena and Polson Police Departments, the United States Department of Justice - Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Homeland Security Investigations, the Montana Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, and the States of Jersey Police Department, Isle of Jersey, near the UK.

The internet exchange of child pornography creates a market for the victimization of children. That market destroys lives and robs children of their innocence. It is a grotesque crime that must be dealt with in a manner that fully reflects the tragedy it causes its victims. This prosecution is a product of diligent work by the very dedicated, skilled and highly trained agents of Operation Kingdom Conqueror. As the work of this team of professionals—from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, State of Montana DCI, the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Homeland Security, Polson Police Department and the Helena Police Department—continues, there will be more cases and more defendants indicted from all across the United States. These agents, and this office, will never relax our commitment to the protection of children." United States Attorney for the District of Montana, Michael W. Cotter.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Cyndee L. Peterson and Maureen C. Cain with the U.S. Department of Justice, Child Exploitation & Obscenity Section, prosecuted Peterson and Grovo on behalf of the United States.

This case was initiated under the Department of Justice's Project Safe Childhood initiative which was launched in 2006 to combat the proliferation of technology-facilitated crimes involving the sexual exploitation of children. Through a network of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and advocacy organizations, Project Safe Childhood attempts to protect children by investigating and prosecuting offenders involved in child sexual exploitation. It is implemented through partnerships including the Montana Internet Crimes Against Children Task (or the MT ICAC). The ICAC Task Force Program was created to assist state and local law enforcement agencies by enhancing their investigative response to technology facilitated crimes against children.

LAW ENFORCEMENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Training and seminars for Federal, State, and Local Law Enforcement Agencies.



Help us combat the proliferation of sexual exploitation crimes against children.

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