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U.S. Attorney's Report to the District

The U.S. Department of Justice has a special obligation to serve the interests of those persons who are powerless to protect themselves. Children are the most helpless members of society, and we therefore have the highest obligation to protect them. While the Department has long been active in combating the sexual exploitation of minors, new federal legislation and new initiatives have led to an escalation of those efforts in recent years.

In 2006, the Department of Justice commenced Project Safe Childhood, a national program to combat child exploitation involving multiple agencies, coordinated by the U.S. Attorneys. PSC involves both the identification, investigation and prosecution of persons involved in child exploitation, and an education component designed to prevent children from becoming victims. As part of that effort, attorneys in this office have given scores of presentations to parents and children across the district. Internet safety resources can be found at these sites: www.ProjectSafeChildhood.gov and www.NetSmartz.org as well as by visiting the PSC links on this website.

Last month, Attorney General Holder sent to Congress the first National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction. The new strategy features the first comprehensive threat assessment of the dangers facing children from child pornography, online enticement, child sex tourism, and commercial sexual exploitation, and contains a blueprint to strengthen collaborative efforts to combat these crimes. The National Strategy can be viewed in its entirety at www.projectsafchildhood.gov/docs/natstrategyreport.pdf.

This office has a well-earned reputation for being especially dedicated to the mission of protecting children. Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney Laurel White has been nationally recognized for her efforts in this area, and the new district PSC coordinator, Assistant U.S. Attorney David Gappa, has long experience in prosecuting such cases. We will continue to devote substantial resources to this important issue. We recently hired an additional prosecutor to focus full-time on PSC cases, and already this year we have charged at least 45 defendants with felony child exploitation offenses.

Just this month, a Porterville woman pleaded guilty to videotaping her boyfriend while he sexually molested minor boys who had been drugged. In another case, a Sacramento man was convicted by a jury following a two-week

trial of prostituting young girls. The evidence established that he repeatedly raped, assaulted and tortured the young victims. In another trial, a grandfather from Lodi was convicted of distributing hundreds of images and videos of children being sexually exploited. An El Dorado County man pleaded guilty to receiving videos and thousands of images of child pornography.

Many of our cases involve trafficking in child pornography. These crimes are not harmless. In addition to creating a market for images that cruelly victimize children, a number of studies indicate a strong correlation between child pornography offenses and contact sex offenses against children. Prosecuting such cases must be part of a comprehensive strategy to protect children.

If you would like to communicate with our office, contact the main number in Sacramento, or submit a suggestion by clicking on the button below. Thank you.

United States Attorney

Benjamin B. Wagner