

United States Department of Justice

For Immediate Release

August 3, 2010 **United States Attorney's Office**
Central District of California

Justice Department Releases First National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction

The Department of Justice has released its first-ever National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction, which provides the first-ever comprehensive assessment of the dangers children face from child pornography, online enticement, and child sex tourism. The strategy outlines a blueprint to strengthen the fight against these crimes, building upon the department's accomplishments in combating child exploitation by establishing specific, aggressive goals and priorities, as well as increasing cooperation and collaboration at all levels of government and the private sector.

As part of the overall strategy, the U.S. Marshals Service is launching a nationwide operation targeting the top 500 most dangerous sex offenders in the nation. Additionally, the Justice Department will create a national database to allow federal, state, tribal, local, and international law enforcement partners to work with each other, engage in undercover operations, share information and intelligence, and conduct analysis on dangerous offenders, future threats, and trends. The department also created 38 additional Assistant U.S. Attorney positions to prosecute child exploitation cases, with two of the new positions being created in Los Angeles.

“Although we’ve made meaningful progress in protecting children across the country, and although we’ve brought a record number of offenders to justice in recent years, it is time to renew our commitment to this work. It is time to intensify our efforts,” said Attorney General Eric Holder. “This new strategy provides the roadmap necessary to do just that—to streamline our education, prevention, and prosecution activities; to improve information sharing and collaboration; and to make the most effective use of limited resources.”

United States Attorney André Birotte Jr. stated: “Federal authorities in this district have a long-running commitment to aggressively prosecute predators who exploit children. Whether it be child pornographers, sex tourists or people who troll the Internet for illegal sexual liaisons, these offenders prey upon the most vulnerable members of society. With continued support from the Department of Justice, which recently provided us with two new prosecutor positions dedicated to handling these cases, and federal and local law enforcement agencies, we will continue our unflinching efforts to fight child exploitation in all its forms.”

Since fiscal year 2006, the Department of Justice has filed cases against more than 8,600 defendants as part of Project Safe Childhood—“PSC”—a unified and comprehensive strategy to combat child exploitation that was started in May 2006. These cases include prosecutions of online enticement of children to engage in sexual activity; interstate transportation of children to engage in sexual activity; production, distribution and possession of child pornography; and other

offenses.

Since fiscal year 2006, the United States Attorney's Office for the Central District of California, which covers seven counties, including Los Angeles and Orange counties, has filed PSC cases against approximately 378 defendants. Some of the recent cases include:

U.S. v. Challender, et al., CR 09-1004-MMM

This case marked only the fourth time in history that a group of defendants were charged with being part of a child exploitation enterprise as a result of engaging in a pattern of offenses involving the sexual exploitation of children. The defendants—Paul Challender, of Big Rapids, Michigan; William Ho, of Hacienda Heights, California; Kevin Wright, of Santa Monica, California; Daniel Murphy, of Millville, New Jersey; and Michael Pharis, Las Vegas, Nevada—belonged to a members-only Internet message board called Quest4More where child predators posted pictures and videos depicting the sexual exploitation of children under the age of five and shared stories and experiences about sexually torturing young children. One part of the message board was reserved for images depicting violent rapes of children under the age of two. The five defendants all pleaded guilty in June and each face up to 20 years in prison when they are sentenced in December.

U.S. v. Tisthammer, CR 08-78-CAS

In October 2007, the FBI executed a search warrant at defendant Carl Tisthammer's home and discovered that he not only collected child pornography, but also produced child pornography involving him and his own daughter. Tisthammer, a prior sex offender, used a peer-to-peer software program to amass a collection of hundreds of images/videos of child pornography on his computer. On March 19, 2010, Tisthammer was convicted by a jury on three counts of production of child pornography, four counts of receipt of child pornography, and one count of possession of child pornography. At his sentencing, which is currently scheduled for September 1, Tisthammer faces a statutory mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years in federal prison.

U.S. v. Ismay, SA CR 08-39-AG

In November 2007, Randall Ismay sent child pornography videos to an undercover officer posing as a 14-year-old boy. A subsequent search of Ismay's home revealed additional child pornography, along with 200 photos of a 7-year-old boy in his underwear that were taken in Ismay's home. Ismay also had an assortment of carnival games, including life-size clown dolls in his house. Following a bench trial, Ismay was convicted of transportation and possession of child pornography. On July 26, Ismay, who had two previously convictions for child molestation, was sentenced to 29 years in prison.

U.S. v. Endacott, CR 08-813-PSG

On October 8, 2009, Drew Michael Endacott was sentenced to 14 years in prison for transportation and possession of child pornography. An inspection of Endacott's luggage by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents at Los Angeles International Airport following his return from Thailand revealed several computer hard drives that contained more than 17,000 images of child pornography and a diary in which Endacott described his sexual exploits with

teenage prostitutes as young as 13 years old. In the diary, Endacott also bragged about violent acts against women and young girls, including physically throwing a prostitute out of a moving car onto the highway.

U.S. v. Frias, CR 09-417-ODW

On March 9, 2009, Martin Frias made contact in a Yahoo! chat room with an undercover Federal Bureau of Investigation agent posing as a 13-year-old girl named Lauren. Almost immediately, Frias asked “Lauren” if she liked older men, told her that he wanted to have sex with someone, and asked her if she would have sex with someone she had just met, namely, him. After several weeks of online chatting, Frias traveled to “Lauren’s” apartment and was arrested by FBI agents. On June 25, 2010, Frias was convicted by a jury of using a facility of interstate commerce to induce a minor to engage in criminal sexual activity. At his sentencing, which is currently scheduled for October 4, Frias faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison.

U.S. v. Lam, SACR 09-194-JVS

On July 26, 2010, Robin Lam pleaded guilty to coercion and enticement of a minor to engage in criminal sexual activity. Lam contacted girls between the ages of 13 and 17 on social networking sites and via text messages, engaged them in sexually graphic conversations, and attempted to arrange meetings for the purpose of having sex. After chatting extensively with a 15-year-old girl, Lam arranged to meet with her at a restaurant. However, a member of the girl’s family learned of the plan and contacted authorities, which prompted The Orange County Sexual Assault Felony Enforcement Team (The SAFE Team) to instead meet Lam and take him into custody. After the arrest, a search warrant was executed at Lam’s house, where officers found a naked 17-year-old girl in his bed. At his sentencing, which is currently scheduled for October 19, Lam faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison.

U.S. v. Chase, CR 08-70-GHK

Only one year after completing a prison term in a child molestation case, Richard Chase began molesting the 10-year-old son of a woman he had befriended. The molestation continued for six years, and continued even after the victim and his mother moved out of Southern California. After the move, Chase convinced the mother to let her son travel to Los Angeles to visit Chase on “vacations” that simply provided new opportunities for Chase to further sexually abuse the victim. On May 24, 2010, after pleading guilty to distribution of child pornography, Chase was sentenced to more than 24 years in prison.

U.S. v. Shoot, CR 08-1178-SJO

Arthur Lee Shoot and his wife were detained for inspection at Los Angeles International Airport after arriving on a flight from the Philippines. In Shoot’s luggage, Customs and Border Protection and ICE agents discovered a camera that contained deleted sexually explicit images of Shoot’s wife’s 7-year-old niece, who lives in the Philippines. Further investigation revealed that Shoot had sexually molested all three of his daughters and as a young man also sexually abused a teenage girl he met at church, conduct that led to three prior convictions but only brief stints in jail. On November 9, 2009, at Shoot’s federal sentencing hearing, his daughters described to the court the trauma resulting from their father’s abuse. The 70-year-old Shoot was subsequently

sentenced to 17½ years in prison for attempting to engage in illicit sexual conduct with a minor in the Phillippi

U.S. v Prowler, CR 06-391-CBM

Last week, an English teacher who went to Thailand for the purpose of engaging in sex with minors, was sentenced to 25 years in prison. The government had appealed a 10-year sentence previously given to Steven Erik Prowler, and when that sentence was overturned, another judge found that his “depraved” conduct warranted a prison term of a quarter century.

Operation Twisted Traveler

This international law enforcement initiative has investigated Americans alleged to have traveled to Cambodia to sexually exploit children. The joint operation has included the United States Attorney’s Office, ICE, the Department of State, the Cambodian National Police and several non-governmental organizations, including Action Pour Les Enfants. As a result of this initiative, prosecutors have filed a series of cases that allege the defendants engaged in illicit sexual conduct with a minor in foreign places. Those cases include:

U.S. v. Sporich, CR 09-934-PSG

On May 14, 2010, Jack Louis Sporich pleaded guilty to engaging in illicit sexual conduct with a minor in a foreign place. In November 2008, Sporich, a prior sex offender, traveled from Los Angeles to Siem Riep, Cambodia and sexually abused two 12-year-old Cambodian boys who lived near Sporich’s home in Cambodia. Sporich lured the boys into his home by encouraging them to swim in the pool, play with toys and video games, take showers, and sleep over. Sporich also gave the boys food and money in exchange for engaging in sexual conduct with him. At his sentencing, currently scheduled for October 25, Sporich faces up to 120 years in prison.

U.S. v. Peeters, CR 09-932-CAS

Erik Peeters is alleged to have traveled from Los Angeles to Cambodia in 2008 and engaged in sexual activity with three Cambodian boys between the ages of 12 and 14. Peeters has pleaded not guilty in the case, and his trial is scheduled for October 5.

U.S. v. Boyajian, CR 09-933-CAS

Ronald Boyajian is alleged to have traveled from Los Angeles to Cambodia between September 2007 and February 2009, and to have engaged in sexual activity with a 10-year-old girl. Boyajian has pleaded not guilty in the case, and his trial is scheduled for September 28.

To continue the fight against all aspects of child exploitation, the Justice Department’s strategy lays out goals to increase coordination among the nation’s investigators, to better train investigators and prosecutors, to improve law enforcement’s technological capabilities, and to enhance research to make better decisions on deterrence, incarceration and monitoring. The strategy also includes a renewed commitment to public awareness and community outreach.

As part of its public outreach efforts, the Department today re-launched ProjectSafeChildhood.gov. PSC is a Justice Department initiative launched in 2006 that aims to

combat the proliferation of technology-facilitated sexual exploitation crimes against children. PSC marshals federal, state, tribal, and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims.

As part of its outreach efforts in Southern California, the United States Attorney's Office is co-sponsoring a Cyber Crime Prevention Symposium that will be held September 29 at the Los Angeles Police Academy. The symposium will provide training on Internet safety to middle school students, parents and educators through panel discussions. The symposium will also feature age-appropriate workshops specifically designed for students. Planned symposium speakers include the United States Attorney and Los Angeles Police Chief Charlie Beck, as well as law enforcement experts from the FBI, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, MySpace, Facebook, the Motion Picture Association of America, and the Los Angeles County Office of Education. Invitations to the Symposium are being sent to middle schools throughout Los Angeles County. Individuals interested in attending should call Ray Vincent at the Los Angeles County Office of Education, Division of Student Support Services, at (562) 922-6377.