



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

STATEMENT

OF

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**U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

BEFORE THE

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Brownback, Co-Chairman Smith, and distinguished Members of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, my name is James Plitt and I am the Chief of the Cyber Crimes Center at the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). I appreciate the opportunity to discuss ICE's authorities and responsibilities with respect to investigating U.S. trans-border child sexual exploitation crimes.

THE ICE MISSION

Among Department of Homeland Security law enforcement agencies, ICE has the most expansive investigative authorities and the largest number of investigators. ICE is the nation's principal investigative agency for crimes related to the nation's borders, including violations of American customs and immigration laws. Our mission is to protect the American people by combating terrorists and other criminals who seek to cross our borders and threaten us here at home. Working overseas, along the nation's borders and throughout the nation's interior, ICE agents and officers are demonstrating that our unified immigration and customs authorities are a powerful tool for identifying, disrupting and dismantling criminal organizations that violate our Nation's borders.

Our agents and officers make it harder for potential terrorists and transnational criminal groups to move themselves, their supporters, illicit funds or weapons across the Nation's borders through traditional human, drug, contraband, or financial smuggling networks, routes and methods. Since its creation in March 2003, ICE has employed its authorities and capabilities against threats to our border, homeland and national security within our broad jurisdiction, including the cross-border Internet sexual exploitation of children.

OPERATION PREDATOR

Operation Predator is an ongoing ICE initiative focused on the trans-border aspects of child exploitation, including the related financial crimes. It is designed to identify and investigate those engaged in Internet child pornography, including the criminal business conspiracies that support this illicit trade. The program organizes ICE's activities in child exploitation investigations to arrest/apprehend and ultimately to prosecute and/or deport a variety of violators, including:

- (1) individuals who engage in the receipt, transfer, distribution, trafficking, sale, facilitation, and production of child pornography in foreign commerce, including utilization of the Internet;
- (2) individuals who travel internationally for child sex tourism or who facilitate such travel;
- (3) individuals who engage in the human smuggling and trafficking of minors into the United States for illicit sexual purposes (sexual exploitation and/or prostitution) or worksite exploitation, and/or commit any crimes resulting in the harm, injury or death of a minor (not including the smuggling of children by parents for family unity reasons);

- (4) foreign nationals/aliens who have been convicted of local, state or federal offenses against minors under the age of 18 and are now eligible for removal from the United States; and
- (5) those same criminal aliens who have been previously deported from the United States for such offenses but have re-entered the country illegally.

These five enforcement categories are an integral part of the mission and responsibility of ICE in terms of border security, since the heinous criminal activities involving child exploitation are not confined within, or hindered by, a country's physical borders, but rather transcend them. The advent of the Internet has created even greater opportunities and incentives for ruthless predators to profit by exploiting children in the borderless anonymity of cyberspace. One can now transmit child pornography through foreign commerce by simply typing on a computer keyboard, with less obstruction and risk than arriving at a port of entry with child pornographic material hidden in luggage.

Officially launched by ICE on July 9, 2003, Operation Predator is currently managed and administered by the Cyber Crimes Center (C3), a headquarters unit of the Office of Investigations, which coordinates enforcement efforts against trans-border child sexual exploitation. As part of those efforts:

- ICE established a single web portal to access all publicly available state Megan's Law databases.
- ICE created a National Child Victim Identification System in partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), the FBI, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, U.S. Secret Service, the Department of Justice, the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces, and other agencies.
- ICE stationed attachés internationally to work with foreign governments and foreign law enforcement counterparts to enhance coordination and cooperation on trans-border crime.
- ICE is working with INTERPOL to enhance foreign government intelligence on criminal child predators.

As of September 9, 2006, ICE has made a total of 8,763 criminal and administrative arrests under Operation Predator. Of that total, 7,648 were non-US citizens (aliens/foreign nationals); and of those, 4,761 individuals were deported from the United States.

CONCLUSION

C3 is dedicated to identifying all individuals involved in international criminal organizations and component groups that conduct every type of activity associated with trans-border child exploitation, including the related financial crimes. These individuals include those who advertise specific members-only websites, those who facilitate customer payments, those who control the members-only websites, and those who ultimately receive the proceeds from the sale of child exploitation images. With an investigative expertise in international financial crimes, including money laundering, C3

is working diligently to identify and dismantle the international criminal organizations that operate child exploitation websites, as well as identifying their many individuals that frequent or subscribe to these websites. ICE coordinates closely with the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces, various elements of the Department of Justice's Project Safe Childhood initiative, and non-governmental organizations like the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to maximize the effect of these international investigations and thereby protect this nation's most valuable resource, our children.

I hope my remarks today have been helpful and informative. I thank you for inviting me and I will be glad to answer any questions you may have at this time.