

Child Exploitation

Use of the mail to traffic in child pornography, or otherwise sexually exploit children, continues to be a significant problem. Child pornographers incorrectly assume the U.S. Mail will provide a safe, reliable and anonymous vehicle to traffic in this illicit material. Clearly, these criminals are unaware that Postal Inspectors have for years been regarded internationally as leaders in the fight against child exploitation.



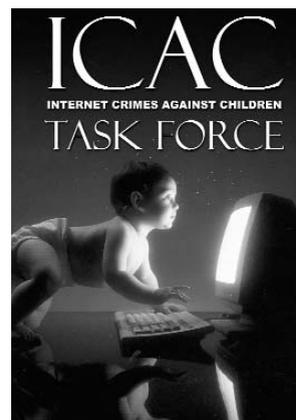
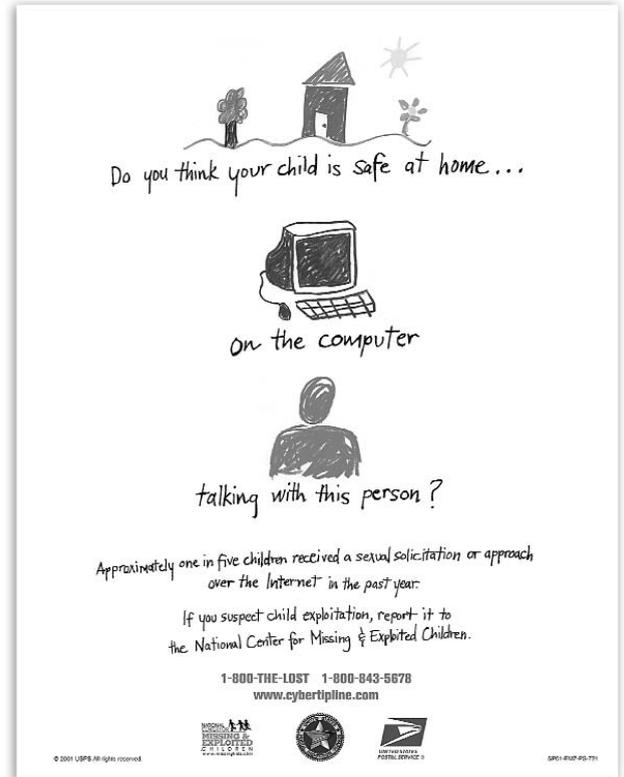
The Postal Inspection Service produced a poster (upper right) to raise public awareness of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's Cyber Tipline—and the need for parents to monitor their children's online activities. The poster was distributed for display at 40,000 post offices nationwide.

The exchange of child pornography by mail is often preceded or accompanied by communication over the Internet. Child molesters and pornographers often use the Internet to seek potential victims, communicate with like-minded individuals and locate sources of child pornography. Over the past several years, there has been an increase in unlawful computer transmissions and Internet ads for child pornography, which occur hand-in-hand with the trafficking of child pornography videotapes and computer disks through the mail. In FY 2001, 78 percent of child exploitation cases

investigated by Postal Inspectors involved computers, as well as postal violations.

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service has a long-standing reputation as a leader in the battle against child exploitation. Since the passage of the Child Protection Act of 1984, Postal Inspectors have conducted 4,134 such investigations, resulting in the arrests of 3,462 individuals who used the mail in violation of federal child pornography laws.

In FY 2001, Postal Inspectors arrested 335 individuals on child sexual





Chief Postal Inspector Kenneth C. Weaver and Attorney General John D. Ashcroft announced the successful conclusion of a two-year investigation that dismantled the largest-known commercial child pornography enterprise ever uncovered. Thirty federally funded Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task forces throughout the United States partnered with Postal Inspectors nationwide to launch Operation Avalanche, an undercover sting aimed at eliminating child pornography through the U.S. Mail and via the Internet.

exploitation offenses related to the mail; Inspectors reported 259 convictions in such cases from this and prior fiscal years. Incident to a search of a suspect's property, Postal Inspectors often find evidence that the target of the investigation is also a child molester. As a result of Inspectors' casework this past fiscal year, 124 child molesters were identified and 114 child victims saved from further abuse.

Attorney General John D. Ashcroft and Chief Postal Inspector Kenneth C. Weaver announced in August 2001 the successful conclusion of a two-year investigation that dismantled the largest-known commercial child pornography enterprise ever uncovered. Thirty federally funded groups comprise the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, which partnered with Postal Inspectors nationwide to

launch Operation Avalanche, an undercover operation aimed at eliminating child pornography through the U.S. Mail and via the Internet. Administered and funded in 1998 through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, under the Department of Justice, the ICAC Task Force program provides grants to state and local law enforcement agencies, which use them to build regional task forces that combat Internet-related crimes against children.

Operation Avalanche began in 1999, when Postal Inspectors found that a husband and wife in Ft. Worth, TX, were using a Web site to advertise and distribute child pornography. The majority of their business profits came from the subscription sales of child pornography—in just one month, the business grossed as much as \$1.4 million. In partnership with the Dallas

Police Department's ICAC Task Force, investigators determined that customers could subscribe to child pornography Web sites through a Ft. Worth post office box or via the Internet. The site also had a classified ads section, allowing customers to place or respond to personal ads for child pornography. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's Cyber Tipline received more than 250 complaints against the Web site from citizens around the world.

Task force members served federal search warrants at the business and the owners' home on September 8, 1999, resulting in an 89-count federal indictment against the owners for conspiracy to distribute and possess child pornography. They were convicted following a jury trial in December 2000. On August 6, 2001, the husband was sentenced to life in prison, and the wife was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment.

Selected Postal Inspection Service case activity in FY 2001 related to the use of the mail for child exploitation follows.

◆ An alleged child molester was arrested in February 2001 in Pendeli, Greece, following a five-month investigation by Postal Inspectors and the Polk County, FL Sheriff's Department into the disappearance of a 14-year-old girl from Mulberry, FL. Postal Inspectors determined the man had used the mail and the Internet to lure the child from her home and convinced her to travel to Greece to be with him. She was recovered in Greece and returned to her family in Florida after Postal Inspectors served search warrants and found evidence leading them to identify and locate the suspect.

◆ A Cedar Grove, NC, man was sentenced in federal district court on August 7, 2001, to 32 years and six

months in prison, with 15 years of his sentence suspended, plus three years' probation and \$8,100 in restitution. Postal Inspectors seized a large quantity of child pornography in January 2001, including videotapes and photographs of the suspect sexually abusing minor females. His victims included his two stepdaughters and a four-year-old girl.

◆ A man from Glen Allen, VA, received a stiff sentence of 21 years and eight months in prison after an investigation by Postal Inspectors, FBI agents and members of the Henrico County Sheriff's Department. The man was a previously convicted child sex offender who tried to procure child pornography videos by mail. He offered to "sell" a 12-year-old boy for sexual activity to an undercover Postal Inspector. Inspectors also identified and rescued two neighborhood boys he had molested.

◆ A 35-year-old Illinois man, who was an intensive-care nurse at several Chicago-area hospitals, pled guilty in federal district court on June 26 as a result of his arrest by Postal Inspectors for receiving child pornography by mail. The nurse admitted he sexually assaulted as many as 18 young girls and women who were under his care. He selected victims who were either in comas, unconscious or so sedated they could not defend themselves and were unaware of what had hap-

pened. State charges are pending.

◆ The parents of several minor-age girls reported their children had received letters asking for sexual favors from a Pennsylvania man serving a two-year sentence for a Megan's Law violation. Postal Inspectors found letters and child pornography in the inmate's cell. He had previously served a 22-year sentence for the rape and attempted kidnapping of two eight- and 11-year-old girls. He was indicted in April 2001 on charges of child exploitation.

◆ A Portland, OR, man who is terminally ill with the AIDS virus was sentenced on February 14 to five years and three months in prison. He admitted to engaging in sexual activity with more than 3,000 males, many of them minors. Postal Inspectors learned he picked up "street kids" and videotaped his sexual activity with them. He mailed copies of the tapes to friends he met on the Internet.



Photo by Gerald Merma, U.S. Postal Service



1998

Postal Inspectors play an integral role on a multi-agency task force that arrests the Unabomber, marking the end of one of the largest and most

extensive criminal manhunts in modern history.



2000

"Know Fraud" is launched, the largest consumer protection effort ever undertaken, with postcards sent to 123 million addresses across America, arming consumers with common-sense tips and guidelines to prevent telemarketing and mail fraud.

2001

"Operation Avalanche," a coordinated strike by the Postal Inspection Service and 30 other federally funded task forces, results in the arrest of 100 subscribers to child pornography Web sites on the Internet.

