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Child Porn Ring Bust



Lance Evans

The U.S. calls it the largest child porn bust ever, covering 37 states and crossing international lines. So far, 100 people have been arrested, two of them from Northern California.

Hayward resident Anthony Tapia and Chico resident Jeff Minter were among those arrested. Tapia was arrested on April 27, accused of trafficking child pornography. Minter has been indicted in January on similar charges. Three other Californians are being investigated.

U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft says more arrests are coming. The busts are aimed at those who order child porn, and show that children are running into sex offenders "in the back alleys and dark corners of the Internet."

The busts, called Operation Avalanche, prompted a warning from Ashcroft: "To those in the sex industry who illegally prey on America's innocents, the Justice Department will use every resource available to identify, investigate and prosecute those who violate the law."

The two year investigation centers on a company run by Thomas and Janice Reedy. He has been sentenced to life in prison. She was sentenced to fourteen years for distribution of child pornography.

They operated their child porn site from a Dallas warehouse, calling the company Landslide Productions. Now investigators have made 100 arrests, and are still going after customers who used the Reedy's site to download child porn.

The Reedy's also sent videotapes to their customers.

Chief Postal Inspector Ken Weaver says "We took the most egregious-those individuals who have a clear predisposition to violate the law, and went after them. But there will be many more arrests."

The Reedys made more than a million dollars a month from their subscribers, estimated at 250,000.

Investigators say the couple provided access to porn sites run by operators in Russia and Indonesia. Warrants are out for those arrests.

Ashcroft has indicated he wants pornography to have higher priority for federal authorities. He says in the past investigators have been "outgunned and out-teched," but now are making strides in cracking down on cyberporn.

» 08-08-2001

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