



INSPECTOR GENERAL  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
DEFENSE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE SERVICE  
COLUMBUS RESIDENT AGENCY  
EASTON PLAZA ONE  
4449 EASTON WAY, SUITE 375  
COLUMBUS, OH 43219

(Investigations)

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

200800080D-18-OCT-2007-40CO-W1/Z

December 3, 2007

OPERATION FLICKER, Columbus, OH

SPECIAL INTEREST CASE

C-1

CLASSIFICATION:

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## NARRATIVE

1. This investigation into individuals who subscribed to predicated child pornography websites was initiated based upon information received October 15, 2007, from a Special Agent (SA) with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Columbus Resident Agency (RAC/Columbus) and as a result of DCIS Project "Operation Flicker" (CCN: 200701199X-29-MAY-2007-60DC-W1). ICE-Columbus referred identifying information for four individuals with ties to the Department of Defense (DoD) that are in the Columbus Resident Agency area of responsibility and are suspected of involvement in child pornography. In addition to the information provided by ICE Columbus, six additional DoD related subjects in the Cleveland, OH and Detroit, MI area were identified by the DHS-ICE Detroit, MI field office and through the efforts of the Mid-Atlantic Field Office (MAFO) in Project Flicker. The persons identified are active and retired military service members, DoD civilians, and DoD contractor employees; several of the individuals have Secret or higher clearances and some may have used .mil e-mail addresses to register for access to child pornography websites.

2. In April 2006, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement/Cyber Crimes Center/Child Exploitation Section (ICE/C3/CES) initiated an investigation of a criminal organization operating a commercial child pornography website known as "Home Collection." The investigation revealed that the same organization is operating numerous commercial child pornography websites. In addition, the organization utilized various PayPal accounts to process the payments for access to the member-restricted websites. The is a joint investigation with ICE/C3/CES, ICE/RAC/Birmingham, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the U.S. Department of Justice/Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, and multiple USAO offices, including the USAO for the Northern District of Alabama. ICE designated this effort Project Flicker. DCIS-MAFO and DCIS field office representatives assisted ICE after determining that DoD personnel and/or contractor personnel may have been involved in accessing and obtaining child pornography.

3. ICE/C3/CES conducted over 60 undercover transactions at the advertising websites associated with this investigation. The investigation determined that a specific criminal organization operates approximately 18 commercial child pornography portal websites that provide access to approximately 18 child pornography member-restricted websites, using a specific and identifiable payment website known as "iWest." The investigation identified that the criminal organization (1) uses various PayPal accounts to facilitate the customer payments; (2) uses specific subject identifiers within the PayPal accounts to identify purchases into the various member-restricted websites; and, (3) uses specific administrative e-mail accounts to distribute access to the member restricted websites.

4. Project Flicker data was sorted to identify individuals who used their .mil e-mail address, Fleet Post Office (FPO), or Army Post Office (APO) military zip codes to register for the PayPal service for access to the child pornography websites. The suspects identified in the Columbus RA AOR will be titled as subjects if the investigation determines the individuals were involved in acquiring and/or transmitting child pornography. The priority for investigating suspects will be assessed based on their security clearances, position in their DoD organizations, whether their DoD position provides access to children, and whether they are a recidivist.

5. Prior to opening this investigation, the reporting agent met with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agent ██████████ Columbus, OH regarding Operation Flicker. An investigative plan was discussed. ██████████ also provided identifying information on Department of Defense employees that are in the Columbus Resident Agency area of responsibility and are suspected of being involved in child pornography. ██████████ offered ICE cooperation in this investigation.

6. Due to DCIS Headquarters' direction and other DCIS investigative priorities, this investigation is cancelled. No subjects were formally titled in the DCIS IDS System. No judicial or administrative action will occur. There is no loss to the U.S. Government. There were no management control deficiencies identified during the course of this investigation.

Prepared by SA [REDACTED], Columbus RA

APPR [REDACTED]

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