



\*\*\* For Immediate Release \*\*\*

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### Whatcom County Net Nanny Operation Leads to 20 Arrests

**Bellingham** – 20 dangerous sexual predators that targeted children in Whatcom County were taken off the streets thanks to a multi-day operation run by law enforcement, county prosecutors, and victim advocate specialists. In addition to the identified suspects, 3 suspects have been recognized as having access to 13 children at risk of being abused. Supplemental follow-up investigations are currently underway to identify those children and arrange the appropriate assistance for any abuse they may have been exposed to.

The operation is called "Net Nanny" and began in August of 2015 by the Washington State Patrol (WSP). Since the original operation, there have been nine additional operations in Washington State. WSP Missing and Exploited Children Task Force (MECTF), an Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) affiliate, spearheads the multi-agency operation that includes partners in federal, state, and local law enforcement.

The "Net Nanny" series, conducted throughout the State of Washington, has now netted a total of 159 arrests and rescued 22 identified child victims throughout the state.

"Through the collaborative work of multiple agencies, we are actively taking sexual predators, who target children, off the streets and off the internet," says WSP Chief John R. Batiste. "This operation is protecting our vulnerable children and making communities safer."

Whatcom County Sheriff Bill Elfo commented: "The arrests stemming from Operation Net Nanny resulted in the capture of those seeking out very young and very vulnerable children for sexual exploitation and contact. Hopefully these arrests will cut short these predators as they search out victims and also serve as a deterrent to those with similar intentions and even save lives. This operation highlights the partnerships between the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office and other local, state and federal law enforcement agencies working together to keep our communities and children safe."

Chief David Doll of Bellingham Police Department said, "Protecting children and holding predators accountable will always be a priority for the Bellingham Police Department."

Whatcom County Mayor Linville stated, "Our number one priority is public safety, and we rely on our police to help protect all of our residents, especially children."

Law enforcement officers acting in an undercover capacity, communicated on the internet through various websites with individuals interested in having sex with children. The operation generated hundreds of

responses. The would-be perpetrators who were arrested in the operation traveled to meet with undercover detectives posing as young girls and boys with the intent to engage in sexual activity with them.

Primary crimes investigated are:

RCW 9A.44.073 – Rape of a child in the first/second degree - attempt

RCW 9.68A.100 – Commercial sexual abuse of a minor

RCW 9.68A.070 – Possession of depictions of minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct

RCW 9.68A.050 – Dealing in depictions of minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct

RCW 9.68A.090 – Communication with a minor for immoral purposes

RCW 69.50.4015 – Involving a person under 18 in unlawful controlled substance transaction

RCW 69.50.406 – Distribution to persons under age 18

The names of the individuals arrested during the operation are:

- Aguilar, Aaron A., 26, Bellingham, WA
- Anderson, Jaime R., 33, Bellingham, WA
- Archer, Marc V., 60, Bellingham, WA
- Assink, Simson D., 23, Bellingham, WA
- Brown, Christopher M., 39, Bellingham, WA
- Chino -Acatitlan, Gilberto, 28, Bow, WA
- Fagin, Mark A., 43, Bellingham, WA
- Fissori, David L., 40, Bellingham, WA
- Garst, Mark E., 57, Deming, WA
- Hagens, Chadwin A., 34, Bellingham, WA
- Johnson, Steven W., 45, Yakima, WA
- Kinley, Aaron L., 26, Bellingham, WA
- Lawson, Dillon R., 20, Mt. Vernon, WA
- Lundberg, Jason J., 43, Ferndale, WA
- Ness, Tanner M., 21, Woodinville, WA
- Oritz, James D., 34, Everson, WA
- Rickle, George V., 66, Poulsbo, WA
- Severson, Mathew A., 51, Bellingham, WA
- Weinstein, Jeffrey A., 41, Bellingham, WA
- Welch, George M., 26, Bellingham, WA

The success of this operation was a collaborative effort involving over 60 dedicated law enforcement and staff from the following agencies:

- Washington State Patrol Missing and Exploited Children Task Force
- Washington State Patrol Human Trafficking Task Force East and West
- Southeast Region Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force
- U.S. Homeland Security Investigations
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS)
- Whatcom County Sheriff's Office
- Whatcom Gang and Drug Task Force
- Jefferson County Prosecutor's Office
- Whatcom County Prosecuting Attorney Office
- Bellingham Police Department
- Washington State Attorney General Office
- Jefferson County Sheriff Office

- U.S. Attorney General Office
- King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office
- Washington State Patrol High-Tech Crime Unit
- Washington State Patrol Criminal Investigation Division
- Washington State Patrol Field Operation Bureau – District 7
- Washington State Patrol Fusion Center

The funding for this operation was made possible due in part by support from the public as well as a generous donation from Operation Underground Railroad (O.U.R.). O.U.R. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) *shares the mission of law enforcement agencies to save children and see that child predators are arrested and prosecuted.* O.U.R. is privileged and honored to partner with our nation's law enforcement heroes in this important cause to combat the sexual exploitation of children in our nation's communities.

MECTF is a state law enforcement agency governed by RCW 13.60.110, and not designated as a 501 (c)(3) charity. Please consult with your tax professional or the Internal Revenue Service to determine if your donation is tax exempt. To donate and support MECTF, please visit:

<http://www.wsp.wa.gov/crime/mectf/>

Any information related to the suspects listed, or information leading to the identity of victims potentially involved in these cases can contact:

- Washington State Patrol, MECTF
  - o [mectf@wsp.wa.gov](mailto:mectf@wsp.wa.gov)
  - o Sergeant Carlos Rodriguez at 360-704-2395

*All proceeds go directly to MECTF and are used explicitly in the identification and safe recovery of exploited children, the investigation of those sexually exploiting children, and successful apprehension and prosecution thereof.*

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