

[Child Porn Ring Busted: Guess US Law Enforcement Doesn't Need Data Retention Bill After All](#)

[Kevin Gosztola](#) Thursday August 4, 2011 5:53 pm



Department of Justice (photo: [DOJ](#))

On Wednesday, the Justice Department [announced](#) 72 people from all over the world had been charged for their participating in a major online child pornography network. The online bulletin board, which was used by around 600 people from the US and abroad, according to news reports, was used to trade horrific images of children being sexually abused before it was finally shut down in the spring.

According to US officials, this is “the largest prosecution of individuals who participated in an online child exploitation enterprise operated for the purpose of promoting child sexual abuse, disseminating child pornography and evading law enforcement.” MSNBC [says](#) the network used “sophisticated encryption” to operate. Here’s a collection of clips describing the feat:

[Telegraph UK:](#)

[USA](#)

US says online child pornography network dismantled

US authorities said on Wednesday they have dismantled an online bulletin board allegedly used by 600 people in the United States and abroad to trade graphic images and videos of child sex abuse.

[USA Today:](#)

Feds charge 72 people in international online child sex ring

By Kevin Johnson, USA TODAY

Updated 17h 53m ago

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WASHINGTON — Federal authorities announced charges against 72 people on five continents Wednesday in connection with a private online bulletin board operation that offered horrific images of adults engaged in violent sex with children, including some infants.

Ynet News:

US: Online pedophile network dismantled

American authorities able to shut down online bulletin board used by 600 offenders worldwide

Yitzhak Benhorin

Published: 08.04.11, 08:42 / [Israel News](#)



WASHINGTON – US authorities have dismantled an online bulletin board allegedly used by 600 pedophiles the world over to trade graphic images and videos of child sex abuse.

New York Times:

Network That Preyed on Children Is Broken

By CHARLIE SAVAGE
Published: August 3, 2011

WASHINGTON — Federal investigators announced on Wednesday that they had dismantled a sophisticated global network of pedophiles who traded pornographic videos and images of children as young as infants over the Internet, using encryption and proxy servers to evade detection.

One thing, however, is noticeably absent from the news coverage of this crackdown. At no point in the coverage is there mention of law enforcement having difficulty doing their job. None of the stories from major news organizations include anything about a bill called the “Protecting Children from Internet Pornographers Act,” which just passed through the House Judiciary Committee.

Lawmakers and sheriffs claim would help make it easier for catching pedophiles but which mandates Internet Service Providers retain data for 18 months. However, the data retention requirement has led digital privacy rights groups like the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) to [conclude](#) the bill is “dangerous” and should be opposed because it “treats every Internet user like a potential criminal.”

Julian Sanchez of the CATO Institute has [concluded](#) the bill would turn ISPs and online companies into “surrogate snoops for the government’s convenience.” Opposition to this bill is growing as it is quite likely the data retained by ISPs would be used by law enforcement to not only go after pedophiles but other criminals as well.

That none of the major news stories mentioned the legislation weaving through Congress seems significant. It means: (1) law enforcement has all the resources it needs to do its job and/or (2) those who wrote up this current event are ignorant of the legislation or chose to omit any mention of the story entirely because they thought it irrelevant.

At a House subcommittee hearing on the legislation on July 12, Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI) [warned](#) of the administrative subpoena authority this legislation would grant law enforcement. He said he “fought to keep administrative subpoena authority out of the PATRIOT Act. And what does law enforcement do? They use national security letters (NSLs) to get around the fact that they didn’t get authority.” He concluded the authority granted to law enforcement could be used for “fishing expeditions.”

A witness at the hearing, Ernie Allen, president and CEO of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, only provided more evidence that law enforcement could use the retained data for other investigations. He claimed Attorney General Eric J. Holder is for data retention on all crimes.

Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX), however, [claims](#), “Investigators do not have adequate tools to track down dangerous pedophiles that prey on the most innocent in our society. Investigators need the assistance of ISPs to identify users and distributors of online child pornography.” He thinks law enforcement should not be “frustrated because vital records were destroyed because there was no requirement to retain them.”

But, the Justice Department’s [press release](#) on this doesn’t suggest anywhere that they ran into significant barriers. It says, “The investigation was part of Operation Predator, a nationwide ICE initiative to identify, investigate and arrest those who prey on children, including human traffickers, international sex tourists, Internet pornographers, and foreign-national predators whose crimes make them deportable.” In fact, ICE director John Morton boasted, “As these criminals try new techniques to digitally erase their trail, ICE’s Homeland Security Investigations along with our U.S. and international law enforcement partners continue to upgrade our strategies and technology to track down the depraved individuals who bring suffering to children.”

It doesn’t appear law enforcement is at a loss here at all. Any collaboration with ISPs behind the scenes appears to have taken place, as it should. The site was shut down in the spring. Now, over seventy have been charged—over seventy from five different continents.

There is no real existing barrier to cracking down on any international child porn ring at all. Filing an administrative subpoena is far easier than actually trying to formulate evidence that will let the police get a warrant.

Law enforcement is already employing NSLs to get around wiretapping restrictions, and more and more often they are using [location tracking](#), which thanks to an outdated communications law currently does not necessarily require a warrant.

This is an underhanded attempt at turning all Americans into suspects in cyberspace. And, if this bill becomes law, one can be certain it will create a database of personal data that will not only be used to catch child predators.