

# Arrest is part of FBI probe of child porn

## Agency works to curb spread through Internet

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One person has been arrested in Kentucky as part of "Operation Candyman," an ongoing FBI investigation into child pornography on the Internet.

Dave Beyer, a spokesman for the FBI office in Kentucky, confirmed the Owensboro arrest but did not release the name of the individual.

The Kentucky office confirmed earlier this week that it was taking part in the undercover investigation announced Monday in Washington, D.C., by Attorney General John Ashcroft and FBI Director Robert S. Mueller.

The investigation aims to curb the spread of child pornography online, where convenience is fueling the exchange of the explicit material. "It used to be when you had to buy it over the counter, it made it more difficult," Beyer said. "Now anyone from their home can access this information, and the other thing is that with the computers, people can manipulate the images and reproduce the images very quickly."

The investigation has focused on Internet discussion groups that allow people to retrieve and distribute child pornography.

Before being shut down, one such group, the Candyman Egroup, boasted more than 7,000 members worldwide, including 2,400 in foreign countries, according to the FBI.

The investigation thus far has resulted in about 90 people being charged in more than 20 states. At least 27 people have been arrested nationwide and more arrests are expected, according to the FBI.

"The FBI takes this crime very seriously, and we are going to continue to aggressively investigate those that would prey on our children," Beyer said.

All of the FBI's 56 field offices, working in conjunction with local law enforcement agencies, have participated in the effort.

It has led to more than 266 searches, including 16 in Kentucky. Beyer said four were in Louisville and two were in Crestwood.

Steven Berry, a spokesman for the FBI in Washington, D.C., said at least four searches have taken place in Indiana.

Individuals identified in the investigation have included Little League coaches, a teacher's aide, a guidance counselor, a school-bus driver, a foster-care parent and various professionals, including law enforcement, according to the FBI.

"It certainly is disappointing to us," Beyer said. "But unfortunately (in) all of those walks of life, there are people that have that proclivity to engage in that behavior."