

# Feds infiltrate, shut down child porn ring

## Sting leads to arrest of customers

By Jim O'Connell

Scripps Howard News Service

WASHINGTON — After arresting the operator of a child pornography ring, U.S. authorities ran his business for a year, offering films with names such as "Little Sweethearts" and promising "discreet delivery."

But for more than 130 customers in 36 states, delivery was quickly followed by a U.S. Postal Inspection Service raid in a crack-down on both customers and operators of the nation's largest known distributor of child pornography.

Forty-five people have been charged in connection with the two-year undercover effort, dubbed "Operation Special Delivery," authorities announced at a press conference Thursday. About 70 more arrests are expected.

Priests, a police officer and a paramedic were among those targeted for accepting pornographic tapes of children as young as 7.

Some of those identified by the operation also were charged with child sex abuse based on evidence gathered at their homes during the raids.

"We have found that approximately 30 percent of the individuals we investigate for using the mails to traffic in child pornogra-

phy are or have been involved in the sexual abuse of children," said Chief Postal Inspector Kenneth Hunter.

In one case, Ray Leslie Opfer of Reno, Nev., has been sentenced to life in prison for the molestation of two brothers — ages 9 and 12 — after inspectors discovered a collection of sexually explicit videos of neighborhood children in his home, Postal Inspector Ray Smith reported.

In another case, authorities said Robert H. Ellison, 65, of Chicago, pleaded for the prompt return of his videos because he feared that he would molest children if he could not relieve his urges through pornography. He was ordered held without bond as a threat to the community.

The investigation began after the Postal Service received complaints in 1993 that a San Diego company called Overseas Male was sending out catalogs offering videotapes of child pornography.

In 1994, U.S. Customs officials arrested James Kemmish, one of the company's operators, after an airport search revealed that he was carrying \$16,000 in cash and child pornography in his luggage.

A search of Kemmish's house produced hundreds of tapes and marketing letters, including the addresses of prospective custom-

ers. Kemmish was sentenced last month to five years in prison following his guilty plea to charges of distributing child pornography.

The man believed to have produced the tapes in Mexico, Troy Frank, committed suicide last year, Hunter said.

"Simply shutting down Overseas Male wasn't enough, because those who created the demand for child pornography were still out there," Hunter said.

So postal authorities changed the name of the company to Island Male and continued offering child pornography through the catalog, authorities said.

When orders were received, postal inspectors delivered the tapes, and then executed search warrants on the homes of customers to recover the tapes and any other pornographic material.

The postal service executed 130 search warrants in 36 states.

The videotapes produced by Overseas Male were sold for between \$50 and \$290, Hunter said.

"They show images of children having sex with each other or with adults — children as young as 7, 8 or 9 years old being sexually abused in unthinkable ways," Hunter said.

"We are not talking about adult videos someone can rent at some corner video store," he said.

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Chief Postal Inspector Kenneth Hunter announces that inspectors have shut down the largest known commercial distributor of child pornography in U.S. history.