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For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
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## Increasing Online Safety for America's Children

### Today's Presidential Action

- As part of his agenda to increase the safety of America's children, President Bush is increasing federal efforts to promote online safety. The President discussed his Administration's commitment to expanding the investigation and vigorous prosecution of child exploitation on the Internet. And, he urged the parents of America to take time to teach their children about staying safe online.
- President Bush also called on the Congress to pass the Child Obscenity and Pornography Prevention Act. This bill, which has already passed the House, makes it illegal for child pornographers to disseminate obscene, computer-generated images of children.

### Background on Today's Presidential Action

- Earlier this month, President Bush hosted the first-ever White House Conference on Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children to promote public awareness of the need to improve children's safety, and to generate recommendations and best practices from experts in the field.
- One of the critical topics discussed at the White House Conference was the growing threat of cyberpredators. Nearly 30 million children and youth go online annually, and 75% of children between the ages of 14 and 17 use the Internet. Research by the University of New Hampshire found that one in five children between the ages of 10 and 17 received a sexual solicitation over the Internet in the last year. One in thirty-three received an aggressive solicitation - a solicitor who asked to meet them somewhere; called them on the telephone; or sent them regular mail, money, or gifts.
- The Internet is a tremendous educational resource for parents, teachers, and children. Parental, private sector, and government efforts are continuing to improve online child safety and will help make the Internet a safer and ever more valuable tool for children. To that end, the Bush Administration is working aggressively to fight child exploitation and child pornography on the Internet.
- The FBI Innocent Images National Initiative identifies and investigates sexual predators who use the Internet to exploit children. Within the past two Fiscal Years, Innocent Images prosecutions have increased 52% (from 421 to 641). The program will expand from 24 to approximately 30 undercover operations during FY 2003.
- The Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces, which are funded by the Justice Department, provide skills, equipment, and personnel to help state and local authorities combat child sexual exploitation. Since 1998, the Task Forces have helped train more than 1,500 prosecutors and 1,900 investigators; served 700 search warrants and 1,400 subpoenas; provided direct investigative assistance in more than 3,000 cases; and arrested more than 1,400 suspects. The President's 2003 Budget seeks to almost double funding for the program (from \$6.5 million in FY 2002 to \$12.5 million in FY 2003), which would expand the regional task force network from 30 to at least 40 states and provide national coverage.
- Federal prosecutions for child exploitation and child pornography, which include Innocent Images prosecutions, are projected to increase 17% for FY 2002 ? a 22% increase in the past two Fiscal Years. With approval of the President's FY 2003 Budget, funding for the Justice Department's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section will have increased 44% in two years (from \$3.4 million in FY 2001 to \$4.9 million in FY



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2003).

### Examples of Recent Federal Actions Against Online Child Exploitation

- The federal government is actively cracking down against online child exploitation, include the following operations:
- In Operation Avalanche, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service conducted a joint undercover operation with the Dallas Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. To date, 130 individuals have been charged in the operation, which broke up what is believed to be the largest commercial child pornography enterprise ever encountered by law enforcement authorities in the United States.
- In Operation Hamlet, the Customs Service dismantled an international ring of child molesters who, in many cases, molested their own children and distributed the images over the Internet. Thus far, 65 exploited children have now been rescued. Twenty-five individuals have been arrested, including 14 Americans.
- In Operation Candyman, the FBI dismantled a major child pornography ring. More than 110 persons have been charged and 36 convicted as a result of the investigation.

### Resources for Parents

- President Bush also urged parents to take time to teach their children about how to stay safe while using the Internet.
- There are a number of resources available to help parents increase their children's online safety, including several federal or federally-sponsored websites:
- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (<http://www.missingkids.com>) offers a variety of resources for parents and children who are interested in online safety. The National Center, in partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Customs Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and state and local law enforcement in Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces, serves as the national CyberTipline. To report information about child pornography and the online enticement of children, parents can log on to <http://www.cybertipline.com> or call the Tipline at 1-800-843-5678.
- The Department of Justice children's page has a list of online safety steps for children that is available at <http://www.cybercrime.gov/rules/rules.htm>
- The 1998 Children's Online Privacy Protection Act was passed by Congress to ensure that websites do not ask children for personal information without parental consent. The FTC has developed a website with online privacy tips for parents and children at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/kidzprivacy/index.html>
- The FBI has produced "A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety" that is available online at <http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguide.htm>

For more information on the President's initiatives, please visit [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

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