



BCPO News

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Child Pornography and Other Charges Filed Against Multiple Defendants During Second Phase of Operation Safe Quarantine

Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina announced today that the second round of a multi-agency investigation fueled by an increase in threatening online activity towards children during the ongoing pandemic has resulted in the arrests of 15 individuals on charges such as possessing and distributing child sexual assault material, among other more serious offenses.

“Operation Safe Quarantine II is the latest result of our pledge to patrol cyberspace and capture the depraved individuals who believe it is acceptable to exploit and endanger children for sexual gratification,” Prosecutor Coffina said. “There is much more work to be done, and this effort will continue to be a priority for the BCPO and the agencies who partnered with us for this investigation.”

Crimes involving children are always of paramount importance. However, investigations into these specific types of crimes became even more urgent as the mass quarantine from the COVID public health crisis significantly increased the opportunities for online sexual exploitation of children.

The number of cybertips received by law enforcement agencies in New Jersey has increased substantially during the pandemic. The New Jersey Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force received nearly 2,400 cybertips for the five-month period ending December 31, 2020. In the last six months, the BCPO High-Tech Crimes Unit has received 74.

Operation Safe Quarantine II ran from August 2020 through January 2021, and resulted in the following arrests:

- Jason McCann, 35, of West Church Street in Blackwood, was charged August 12, 2020 with Luring, Attempted Obscenity of a Minor and Attempted Endangering the Welfare of a Child. McCann believed he was sending pictures of his genitals and videos of himself masturbating to a 13-year-old girl, but the actual recipient was a Special Agent of United States Homeland Security Investigations. He attempted to arrange a meeting at a park in Bordentown Township to have sex with the girl.
- Mark Garagozzo, 31, of Walnut Street in Ambler, Pennsylvania, was charged September 10, 2020 with Endangering the Welfare of a Child (Second Degree). Garagozzo is accused of Possessing Child Sexual Abuse Material. Garagozzo was arrested in Pennsylvania on September 11, 2020 with the assistance of the United States Homeland Security Investigations Philadelphia Field Office and the Ambler Police Department.

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- Frank Gibson, 72, of Foxchase Road in Tabernacle, was charged September 24, 2020 with Endangering the Welfare of a Child (Third Degree). Gibson is charged with Possessing Child Sexual Abuse Material, including images of infants and toddlers.
- Juvenile Male, 17, from Willingboro, was charged September 30, 2020 with Endangering the Welfare of a Child (Third Degree). He is charged with Possessing Child Sexual Abuse Material.
- Douglas Harper, 53, of Guilford Court in Marlton, was charged October 2, 2020 with four counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child (three are Second Degree and one is Third Degree). Harper is charged with Distribution, Possession with the Intent to Distribute, Use of File Sharing Software and Possession of Child Sexual Abuse Material.
- Trevor Brown, 34, of Conestoga Drive in Marlton, was charged October 15, 2020 with two counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child (one is Second Degree and one is Third Degree). Brown is charged with Distributing and Possessing Child Sexual Abuse Material.
- David Epps Jr., 34, of Atsion Road in Medford, was charged October 21, 2020 with two counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child (one is Second Degree and one is Third Degree). Epps Jr. is charged with Distributing and Possessing Child Sexual Abuse Material.
- Sean Higgins, 30, of Temple Boulevard in Palmyra, was charged October 29, 2020 with a total of 28 crimes. He held the position of youth pastor at Harbor Baptist Church, and also served as a teacher at the Harbor Baptist Academy. Higgins was charged with six counts of Manufacturing Child Sexual Abuse Material (First Degree), one count of Aggravated Sexual Assault (First Degree), five counts of Distribution of Child Sexual Abuse Material (Second Degree), one count of Sexual Assault (Second Degree), six counts of Possession of Child Sexual Abuse Material (Third Degree), six counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child (Third Degree), and one count each of Criminal Sexual Contact (Fourth Degree), Obstruction (Fourth Degree) and Contempt (Fourth Degree). The investigation into additional victims within the State of New Jersey and throughout the United States is ongoing. (The BCPO issued a [separate release](#) on this case).
- Stephen Gifford, 36, of Pine Valley Drive in Medford, was charged November 2, 2020 with two counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child (two are First Degree, one is Second Degree and one is Third Degree). Gifford is charged with Distributing and Possessing Child Sexual Abuse Material.
- Bryan Bereza, 40, of Elizabeth Street in Pemberton Borough, was charged December 2, 2020 with six counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child (one is First Degree, four are Second Degree and one is Third Degree) and Invasion of Privacy (Third Degree). Bereza is charged with Manufacturing, Distributing, Possession with the Intent to Distribute, Possessing Child Sexual Abuse Material, Endangering the Welfare of a Child by Impairing or Debauching the Morals of a Child, and Invasion of Privacy by secretly recording an underage female while she was nude and then sending the images to other individuals. On December 3, 2020, Bereza was additionally charged with Sexual Assault by Sexual Contact (Second Degree), three counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child (one is First Degree and two are Second Degree) and Invasion of Privacy (Third Degree).

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- David Bucci, 43, of Gauntt Street in Burlington City, was charged December 22, 2020 with four counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child (two are Second Degree and two are Third Degree). Bucci is charged with Distributing, Possession with the intent to Distribute, Possessing Child Sexual Abuse Material and being the Leader of a Network for Distributing Child Sexual Abuse Material.
- Juvenile Male, 16, from Medford, was charged January 14, 2021 with Endangering the Welfare of a Child (Third Degree). He is charged with Possessing Child Sexual Abuse Material.
- Mihir Patel, 25, of Woodchip Road in Mount Laurel, was charged January 15, 2021 with Attempted Endangering the Welfare of a child (Third Degree) and Attempted Obscenity to a Minor (Third Degree). Patel sent pictures of his genitals to a person he thought was a 10-year-old girl, but the actual recipient was a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- Zachary Snider, 20, of Krysta Court in Mount Laurel, was charged January 25, 2021 with one count of Endangering the Welfare of a Child (Third Degree). Snider is charged with Possession of Child Sexual Abuse Material.
- Azan Babar, 18, of Raleigh Place in Willingboro, was charged January 27, 2021 with three counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child (two are Second Degree and one is Third Degree). Babar is charged with Distribution, Possession with Intent to Distribute and Possession of Child Sexual Abuse Material. Babar was caught selling online links of Child Sexual Abuse Material to other individuals.

The cases are being prepared for presentation to a grand jury for possible indictment. The defendants will be prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutors Joseph Remy and Jennifer Weiler.

These apprehensions follow the initial round of arrests made during the first phase of Operation Safe Quarantine. Ten defendants were apprehended on similar charges over a two-month period ending in July 2020. Seven of them have pleaded guilty in Superior Court.

The investigations during both phases were spearheaded by the BCPO High-Tech Crimes Unit, with assistance from the Cinnaminson Township Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the New Jersey State Police and United States Homeland Security Investigations – Cherry Hill Office.

The BCPO HTC Unit conducts investigations into crimes that involve the use of high-end technology such as computers, cellular telephones, telecommunications equipment and other advanced methods.

BCPO Detective Sergeant Dave Kohler led the investigations of McCann, Gibson, Epps Jr. and the Willingboro juvenile, while BCPO Detective Jennifer Appelman was the lead investigator on the cases against Brown, Bereza, Snider and Babar. BCPO Detective Kevin Sobotka was the lead investigator on the cases involving Harper, Gifford, Bucci and Patel. Garagozzo, Higgins and the juvenile from Medford were investigated by a Cinnaminson Township police officer who is presently assigned to the High-Tech Crimes Unit.

The BCPO High-Tech Crimes Unit, the Cinnaminson Township Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and United States Homeland Security Investigations – Cherry Hill Office are members of the New Jersey State Police Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force.

All persons are considered innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

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