



**City of Paso Robles
October 25, 2023
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**City of Paso Robles
Police Department
900 Park Street
(805) 237-6464**

Law Enforcement Operation Leads to 14 Arrests of Potential Sexual Predators.

Paso Robles, CA- This press release is a reprint of a press release sent by Fresno County Sheriff's Office regarding a multi-jurisdictional operation that included Paso Robles Police Department and the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Department. Any questions about the operation should be referred to Fresno County Sheriff at the contact information at the end of the release.

A total of 14 men have been arrested and booked into the Fresno County Jail on various charges related to arranging to meet with a child for sex. They range in age from 21 to 58. The arrests are a result of the undercover effort called "Operation Boogeyman", which was a multi-agency operation conducted from October 18th - 20th, 2023. The majority of arrestees have since posted bond, been assigned a court date and released from custody.

Participants included members from the following 17 different local, state and federal law enforcement agencies:

- Central California Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force**
- Fresno County Sheriff's Office**
- Fresno Police Department**
- Multi-Agency Gang Enforcement Consortium (MAGEC)**
- Fresno County Probation Adult Compliance Team (ACT)**
- Fresno County District Attorney's Office**
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of California**
- California Department of Justice**
- California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation**
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)**
- Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)**

- Paso Robles Police Department**
- Sanger Police Department
- Visalia Police Department
- Mariposa County Sheriff's Office
- Madera County District Attorney's Office
- San Luis Obispo Sheriff's Office**

The basis for launching this operation is that children's use of electronic devices and social media is higher than ever. A potential danger of being online more often is having an encounter with a sexual predator who is seeking out relationships with children.

To combat the problem, detectives constructed an operation to identify, contact and arrest anyone who may be trying to target a child for sex. Detectives posed as preteen and early teenage old boys and girls to use technology against these predators and safeguard children. During the investigations, these suspects used sexually explicit language and sent graphic photos to the detective pretending to be a child. All of the suspects were first to express their sexual desires and they initiated a time to meet with the detective posing as a child. Once they arrived to the locations, officers arrested them. No actual children were ever used or placed into danger during the operation.

In 2020, a similar operation was conducted, titled "COVID Chat Down." It lasted 14 days and resulted in 34 arrests. In 2022, Operation H.O.O.K. resulted in 19 arrests over four days.

Each year, the Central California Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force receives thousands of online CyberTip reports from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. These tips are related to the distribution and possession of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). ICAC detectives are well-aware that suspects who view CSAM can easily progress into hands on crimes against children. The suspects contacted in "Operation Boogeyman" are prime examples of how sexual behavior can escalate.

ICAC is comprised of 64 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies spread throughout nine counties in the Central Valley. It is dedicated to protecting children online and investigating crimes committed against children, which are facilitated by the Internet and computer usage.

Law enforcement would like to remind the public to be vigilant when it comes to visiting websites and social media outlets. Parents should also monitor their children's internet usage and be aware of the software apps they are using. Parents should keep the dialogue open with their children in order to build trust. Online predators often pretend to be someone else in order to lure their victims in and take advantage of them. Teach children to be wary of the person on the other end of the chat line; many times, people are not who they say they are. Common apps used by suspects include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, Discord, Kik, MeetMe and Scout. Report any

suspicious behavior right away to law enforcement or file a cyber tip through the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. <https://report.cybertip.org/> Operation Boogeyman remains an ongoing investigation and more arrests could be made. There is a possibility that the suspects in this case victimized other people who have never reported it. If you have any additional information about the suspects contacted during this operation, please report it to the Sheriff's Office at (559) 600-3111, Valley Crime Stoppers at (559) 498-7867, www.valleycrimestoppers.org You will remain anonymous and may be eligible for a cash reward.

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