



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY MCMASTER
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Columbia Man Arrested In Child Solicitation Case

Columbia, S.C. - Attorney General Henry McMaster announced today that a Richland County man was arrested on October 19, 2005, and will be prosecuted by his office for violating the state's Child Internet Predator Law. The law, on the books since April 2004, makes it a crime to stalk, lure or entice a child for abduction or sexual assault.

Edward Palmer Hutson, IV, 32, of 1116 Butler Street in Columbia, was arrested by SLED agents on three (3) counts of Criminal Solicitation of a Minor, a felony violation of §16-15-342 of the Code of Laws, and punishable to ten (10) years imprisonment and/or a \$5,000 fine for each count.

During a bond hearing held this morning at the Lexington County Detention Center, Judge Brian W. Jeffcoat set a \$75,000 surety bond for Hutson.

According to the arrest warrants, Hutson allegedly used the Internet to solicit sex from what he believed to be an underage victim. In reality, he was communicating directly with SLED agents.

Hutson was taken into custody by SLED agents, who were joined by agents from the FBI and the Secret Service, as well as Richland County Sheriff's Deputies.

The arrest warrants allege that on at least three (3) occasions, Hutson contacted and communicated with an undercover SLED agent posing as a thirteen (13) year old girl, for the purpose of or with the intent of persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing the child to engage or participate in a sexual activity, or a violent crime (as defined by S.C. Code), or with the intent to perform a sexual activity in the presence of the child, or person reasonably believed to be a child under the age of eighteen (18).

A centerpiece of his administration, McMaster will now prosecute Hutson under the law he pushed through the General Assembly with the help of the bill's sponsor, Representative Murrell Smith of Sumter.

This case was developed by the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC), using the S.C. Computer Crimes Center, a partnership of SLED, the Secret Service, and the FBI. ICAC is operated by the Attorney General's Office, and used to prosecute child sexual exploitation, pornography, and now cyber enticement cases.

Attorney General McMaster stressed that all defendants are presumed innocent until and unless they are proven guilty in a court of law.

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