



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY McMASTER
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Easley Man Arrested By AG's Internet Predator Task Force

Columbia, S.C. - Attorney General Henry McMaster has announced the arrest of a suspected Internet child predator in the small town of Westminster, South Carolina.

The Westminster Police Department is a partner in the Attorney General's Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force.

Timothy Allen Simmons, Sr., 44, of 106 Kaye Street in Easley, was arrested on January 4, 2006, on charges of Criminal Solicitation of a Minor (§16-15-342), a felony offense punishable to ten (10) years imprisonment.

According to arrest warrants, on or about December 21, 2005, Simmons began chatting online with a person he believed to be a thirteen (13) year old girl. In reality, he was soliciting sex from an officer of the Westminster Police Department. Simmons also solicited sex from a second online persona monitored by the department, a fourteen (14) year old girl. Simmons was arrested and taken into custody on January 4, 2006, and a search warrant was executed at his home.

A bond hearing was held this morning at the Oconee County Detention Center in Walhalla. Judge Rebecca Anderson set a \$50,000 surety bond for Simmons. A trial date has not been set.

"Using the new Internet predator law, our undercover stings have turned the predators into the prey," said McMaster. "This arrest shows that predators can be found anywhere in the state, even in the quietest hometowns. Parents must remain vigilant against this growing threat to our children."

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

The South Carolina Task Force is part of a federal Department of Justice ICAC network dedicated to assisting state and local law enforcement agencies' efforts to combat child cyber enticement and child exploitation. Locally, it is operated by the Attorney General's Office in partnership with the State Law Enforcement Division and the South Carolina Computer Crimes Center.

Using the Internet predator law he pushed through the General Assembly in 2004, McMaster and the ICAC Task Force have aggressively investigated and prosecuted child cyber enticement cases. The law makes it a crime to stalk, lure or entice a child for abduction or sexual assault.

McMaster is now expanding the ICAC task force partnership to include local law enforcement agencies, with the Attorney General's Office providing assistance with federal ICAC funding, training and resources. In return, local law enforcement agencies will conduct proactive undercover Internet predator sting operations. As part of the agreement, the Attorney General's Office will prosecute the Internet predator cases with the local Solicitor prosecuting other child exploitation crimes.

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