



# ***NEWS RELEASE***

**OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY McMASTER**  
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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## **Pennsylvania Man Arrested In Child Internet Predator Sting**

**Columbia, S.C.** – Attorney General Henry McMaster announced today that a man from Lebanon, Pennsylvania, who has been living in Florence County while working in the state, was arrested on April 12, 2005, and will be prosecuted 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 assault.

Michael Rothermel, 55, residing in the state at 2210 W. Jody Road, Apt. A-8, in Florence, was arrested by SLED agents on one (1) count 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 yesterday at the Lexington County Sheriff's Office, the state argued that Rothermel was a danger to the community and a flight risk, citing his temporary residence and items found in a search of his Florence residence that included written accounts of rape and a collection of materials associated with bondage and sado-masochistic sexual activity. Rothermel was denied bond.

According to the arrest warrants, Rothermel 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.

The arrest warrants allege that on at least one (1) occasion, Rothermel 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 Rothermel 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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