



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY McMASTER
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Newberry Man Arrested By Internet Predator Task Force

Columbia, S.C. – Attorney General Henry McMaster announced today that Joseph Elbert Mitchell, 35, of 2014 Montgomery Street in Newberry, was arrested by the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) on Friday, February 24, 2006, and charged with four (4) counts of Criminal Solicitation of a Minor (§16-15-342), a felony offense punishable to ten (10) years imprisonment on each count.

On Thursday, February 23, SLED agents executed a search warrant at Mitchell's residence, and seized computer equipment and various computer-related items.

Arrest warrants allege that beginning on or about December 21, 2005, Mitchell solicited sexual activity via the Internet from individuals whom he believed to be thirteen (13) and fourteen (14) year old girls. In reality, he was soliciting sex from undercover agents of SLED, the Westminster Police Department, the Aiken County Sheriff's Department, and the Charleston Police Department -- all members of the Attorney General's Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

Mitchell is currently bedridden following major surgery. Judge Barry S. Koon traveled to Mitchell's residence this morning to conduct the bond hearing. Due to his immobilization, Mitchell was given a personal recognizance bond with the special condition that even his limited activities be monitored closely by law enforcement.

A trial date has not been set.

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

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