



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY McMASTER
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Westminster Police Arrest Convicted Sex Offender In Online Predator Sting

Columbia, S.C. – South Carolina Attorney General Henry McMaster announced today that the Westminster Police Department has arrested a convicted sex offender in an undercover Internet Predator sting. Westminster is a member of the Attorney General's Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force.

Lowell Dean Thomas, 45, of 903 Pelzer Highway, in Easley, was arrested today, July 18, 2006, on one (1) count of Criminal Solicitation of a Minor (§ 16-15-342), a felony offense punishable to ten (10) years imprisonment and one (1) count of Attempted Criminal Sexual Conduct With a Minor (§ 16-3-655(B)), a felony offense punishable to twenty (20) years imprisonment.

Arrest warrants allege that Thomas began soliciting sexual activity over the Internet at approximately 1:00 a.m. on July 18, 2006, from a person he believed to be a fourteen (14) year old girl. In reality, he was soliciting sex from an officer of the Westminster Police Department. Thomas arranged to meet the "girl" at a predetermined location, and was arrested upon his arrival in Westminster at approximately 2:30 p.m. today.

A review of Thomas' criminal record has revealed that he was convicted in 1991 of Criminal Sexual Conduct in the Third Degree.

A search warrant was executed today at Thomas' residence by the Westminster Police Department and the Pickens County Sheriff's Office. The full results of that search are not known at this time.

A bond hearing for Thomas will be held at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 19, 2006, at the Oconee County Detention Center.

The case will be prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office.

This arrest is the tenth for Westminster, and the thirty-third for the Internet Predator Task Force.

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

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