

CYBER CRIME

Child porn rises in county*Unemployment may be a factor, investigator infers*Photo 1 of 2 | [Zoom Photo](#) +

Detective Brandon Bloomfield, Forensic Computer Examiner, foreground, and Sergeant Josh Moulin, Task Force Commander work on a computer in their Central Point lab set for computer forensics. Bob Pennell photo

Bob Pennell

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By Hannah Guzik
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The Southern Oregon High-Tech Crimes Task Force has seen a 9 percent increase in cases involving child pornography and child sexual exploitation over the past year, according to task force officials.

The increase could be a side-effect of the recession's high unemployment rate, leaving more people with more time to surf the internet — and hurt kids, said Sgt. Josh Moulin, the task force commander.

"Our child porn cases have gone through the roof," he said.

"Every single year we've been in existence our cases have increased," Moulin said. "But it seems that since the economy has been hit the hardest, our caseload has increased the most."

The task force handles cases from law enforcement agencies located in the southern half of the state.

Moulin and Detective Brandon Bloomfield — the only officials assigned to the lab — are analyzing computers and other electronic equipment seized at the homes of Ashland resident James Auchincloss, half-brother to the late Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, and Eagle Point resident Dennis Vickoren for evidence of child porn, at the request of the Ashland Police Department.

Police submitted the electronic equipment to the lab last October, but because the task force felt that there was no immediate threat, the case was assigned a low priority, resulting in a processing delay, Moulin said.

In addition, the lab is understaffed, he said. The task force has a five-month backlog of cases, something that could be remedied if the lab had about three more people assigned to it, Moulin said.

"We definitely would like to have added personnel and we hope that in the future some of the agencies will eventually be able to send somebody to the task force," he said. "We have enough work that we could have five full time people up here."

Typically police departments pay to train officers in computer forensics — an expensive and time-consuming process — and then send them to the lab to help with cases.

Most of the child porn and child sexual exploitation cases the lab receives come from Jackson, Josephine and Curry counties, Moulin said. In Jackson and Josephine counties, 400 people are registered for trading child porn, he said.

The task force would like to have the time and resources to go undercover and try to catch some of those people in the act of trading child porn online, Moulin said.

"We're hardly touching those cases," he said. "We have never, ever done a proactive case where we haven't found someone who was breaking the law."

The task force devotes much of its time to investigating cases involving crimes against children. Last year, the lab processed 116 cases, 37 of which involved child sexual exploitation, child pornography or child sexual abuse, Moulin said.

The task forces' total number of cases has increased 27 percent in the past year. In addition to crimes involving children, assault and stalking cases have dramatically increased, Moulin said.

When lab officials receive a piece of electronic equipment, such as a computer or cell phone, they remove the hard drive, where data is stored, make a copy of the hard drive, and then inspect the copy using the lab's computers. This insures that the original evidence is not altered, Moulin said.

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The lab, which has been operating in Central Point since 2005 and in 2007 became a regional task force, has faced heavier caseloads each year due to the wider availability and use of technology, he said.

Child porn cases used to involve 400 to 500 images on a computer, he said. Now, they typically involve thousands of images and videos.

"We just finished a case where a person had 180,000 different videos and images of child pornography," Moulin said.

The videos and photographs are often graphic and disturbing — making the job of investigators a harrowing one, he said.

"We've recovered videos here locally of 1- or 2-year-old kids bound and raped. It's all on video. It's the worst of the worst you can imagine, what these people are doing to kids," Moulin said.

However grisly, Moulin said he finds his work worthwhile, because he has helped put hundreds of criminals behind bars. The task force has a 100 percent conviction rate, he said.

"I can tell you that in my law enforcement career this has been the most difficult thing I've done," he said. "But it's also been the most rewarding, because had we not prosecuted these people, they would have gone on undetected."

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