

Two men arrested for possession of child pornography

Written by Kerry Craig
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More arrests expected

Two Hopkins County men are being held in the county jail in lieu of \$10,000 bond each on charges of possession or promotion of child pornography. A third and, possibly, a fourth person may be arrested on similar charges, according to Sheriff's Investigator Daniel Winn.

For the past two months, Winn and Sgt. Corley Weatherford have been working with the Internet Crimes Against Children Taskforce. That association gives the officers access to cases involved in the sharing of known child pornography.

"Based on that information, we were able to locate three IP [Internet protocol] addresses that were used in Sulphur Springs," Winn said. "Now, we don't believe they are connected at all. We have no evidence to suggest there is like a ring or anything like that — these are just private citizens."

The first arrest came about two weeks ago at a residence in Cumby.

"We got one in Cumby. Dathan Darant was charged with possession of child pornography," Winn said. "We served a search warrant at his address about two weeks ago.

"Just based on initial observations while serving the search warrant, it was clear that he was an offender," Winn continued. "He did confess to downloading for the purpose of sexual gratification of children engaged in sexual acts."

A second search warrant was executed on an apartment on South League Street at West Industrial Drive, another IP address.

"A man by the name of Richard Stewart confessed to downloading several thousand videos and images of child pornography," Winn said. "Of course we seized all his electronic equipment and it is being processed at the Department of Public Safety lab in Tyler for forensic downloading purposes.

"We located approximately 10,000 files that were downloaded using his IP address," he said. "Every one of these people had secure [Internet] connections with password protection. It was somebody who knew, inside the house, and, based on Mr. Stewart's confession, he was looking at several thousand.

"Actually, Mr. Stewart was one of the top offenders in the state of Texas according to the ICAT website," the investigator said.

Winn said a third search warrant was served Wednesday, but no arrests have been made so far.

"We seized all the property, all the computers and stuff and that will be sent to Tyler to be processed," he said. "However, we do expect an arrest just as soon as the information comes back."

Winn said he did not suspect any local children were depicted in the photos or videos.

"The National Center for Missing or Exploited Children keeps a data base of all the known child pornography videos and images," he said. "Some of the victims have been located. We don't think anything is local as far as producing child pornography. As far as where they are coming from, that will be based on what forensic investigators at the DPS lab in Tyler find out."

Texas Rangers and the patrol division of Sulphur Springs Police Department assisted Winn and Weatherford.

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