

The End National Defense Network Abuse (END Network Abuse) Act **Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA-07) - Rep. Mark Meadows (R-NC-11)**

The Department of Defense (DoD) lacks the appropriate investigative training and tools to police the trading of child pornography on its computer network.

According to the Internet Crimes Against Children Child Online Protective Services (ICACOPS)—a program that identifies unique IP addresses used for peer-to-peer (P2P) file trading of child pornography in the United States—DoD’s network ranks consistently high for trafficking in child pornography (19 out of 2,891 internet service providers reviewed nationwide, according to 2018 data). This data follows a 2006 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) report that identified 5,200 people, including hundreds of DoD affiliated individuals, suspected of subscribing to websites known to contain child pornography.¹

Despite the scope of the problem, military investigators have admitted that, at times, combating child pornography was not one of the Defense Criminal Investigative Services’ investigative priorities. As a result, military investigators have perennially lacked the skills to follow up investigative leads, including close to 80 percent of the DoD affiliated suspects identified in the 2006 ICE report.

Besides hamstringing DoD prosecution of these criminals, that lack of training and tools to detect and identify offenders prevents military investigators from exposing and removing DoD employees at risk of blackmail, bribery, and other threats—including individuals with access to highly classified information. While these individuals may be unknown today to military criminal investigators, they may be known and vulnerable to exploitation by state governments that use national resources to compromise individuals trading in child pornography on DoD’s network. That is why it is incumbent that military criminal investigators develop the capacity to swiftly identify suspected employees engaged in child pornography or other illicit activity that can be compromised and threaten U.S. national security.

The END Network Abuse Act would improve the training and technical capacity of military criminal investigative organizations to confront the misuse of DoD computers, facilities, and equipment to access and trade child pornography by making use of the same state-of-the-art digital tool used by federal, state and local law enforcement investigators. It would also require DoD to enter into collaborative agreements with appropriate federal, state and local law enforcement entities, child protection organizations, trauma informed health care providers, and targeted social services. Specifically, the bill would direct DoD to:

- Coordinate with the Department of Justice and federal criminal investigative organizations to define investigative jurisdictions and ensure a streamlined referral process;

¹ Department of Defense, Report of Investigation: Operation Flicker, January 28, 2008:
<https://www.scribd.com/doc/36843411/Project-Flicker>

- Partner with a highly qualified national child protection organization or law enforcement training center to provide training to identify, investigate and prosecute perpetrators of online child pornography, and stop the misuse of DoD assets and facilities to sexually exploit children;
- Partner with qualified child protection organizations to ensure wrap-around services for victims;
- Partner with providers, such as Child Advocacy Centers, to identify, investigate, prosecute, and intervene in child sexual exploitation cases;
- Partner with the National Association to Protect Children and the U.S. Special Operations Command Care Coalition to replicate successful outcomes of the H.E.R.O. Child Rescue Corps;
- Develop plans to upgrade military criminal investigative organizations capabilities to address online child sexual exploitation on DoD facilities located in at least two states with a high density of DoD network users, two states with a high population of DoD network users, two states with a large percentage of native populations, and four states with different population sizes; and
- Participate in a multi-jurisdictional task force, engaging federal, state, and local law enforcement.

END Network Abuse Supporters

National Children's Alliance, National Children's Advocacy Center, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), National Criminal Justice Training Center (NCJTC), International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST), American Prosecutor's Association, and National District Attorney's Association (NDAA), Safe States Alliance, and Thorn.

The END Network Abuse Act is a Companion Bill to S.1413 - END Network Abuse Act of 2019, introduced in the U.S. Senate by Senator Schatz (D-HI) and Senator Murkowski (R-AK) on May 9, 2019.

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