State of Wyoming Attorney General

Child Sex Crimes on the Internet

Prepared for: House Judiciary Committee

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Summary

Overview

The statistics herein come from documented observations of one particular type of technology being used to facilitate child exploitation globally. Therefore, at most, the staggering numbers reported reflect a small portion of the severity of this problem given the growing form of predation facilitated by several types of technology associated with the Internet. Prior efforts to measure the use of technology in child exploitation have proven difficult due to the complexity of the systems leveraged by Internet predators. However, this report is able to provide some clear insight into the use of Peer to Peer networks in this type of crime.

Approach

Investigators deploying software written by the State of Wyoming have identified a vast network of traffickers who have distorted the original uses of Peer to Peer (P2P) networks to feed their own needs. The tactics being deployed by law enforcement have resulted in the identification of staggering numbers of individuals trading child sexual abuse movies and images.

Introduction

This report is presented by Flint Waters, Lead Special Agent for the Wyoming Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. (ICAC) Agent Waters is the hands-on supervisor of a team of investigators tasked with interdicting child predators for the State of Wyoming. He carries a daily case load alongside state and federal agents in the Wyoming ICAC Task Force. Agent Waters is the author of the software used in Operation Peer Precision and has trained law enforcement from around the world. He has been recognized as an expert in Internet Child Exploitation in state and federal court and has previously testified before congress.

Estimates

The details you are about to review originate from a single P2P network, one of many used daily on the Internet. These details relate to just one small corner of the Internet. It applies only to one P2P system where child sexual abuse movies and images were presented to undercover law enforcement throughout the world. This data does not include traders using email, chat, social networks, news servers or paid and free web sites. At most it can be seen as a bare minimum of the trafficking of child sexual exploitative materials.

Just One System

During undercover operations officers are presented with the same search results viewable by the predator using the system in their home. These results contain hundreds if not thousands of images of child sexual abuse and are a virtual menu of movies depicting the brutal rape of children as young as infants. Based on the preference of the user, downloads can focus on children being tied up, abused by adults, forced to have sex with animals or any combination thereof.

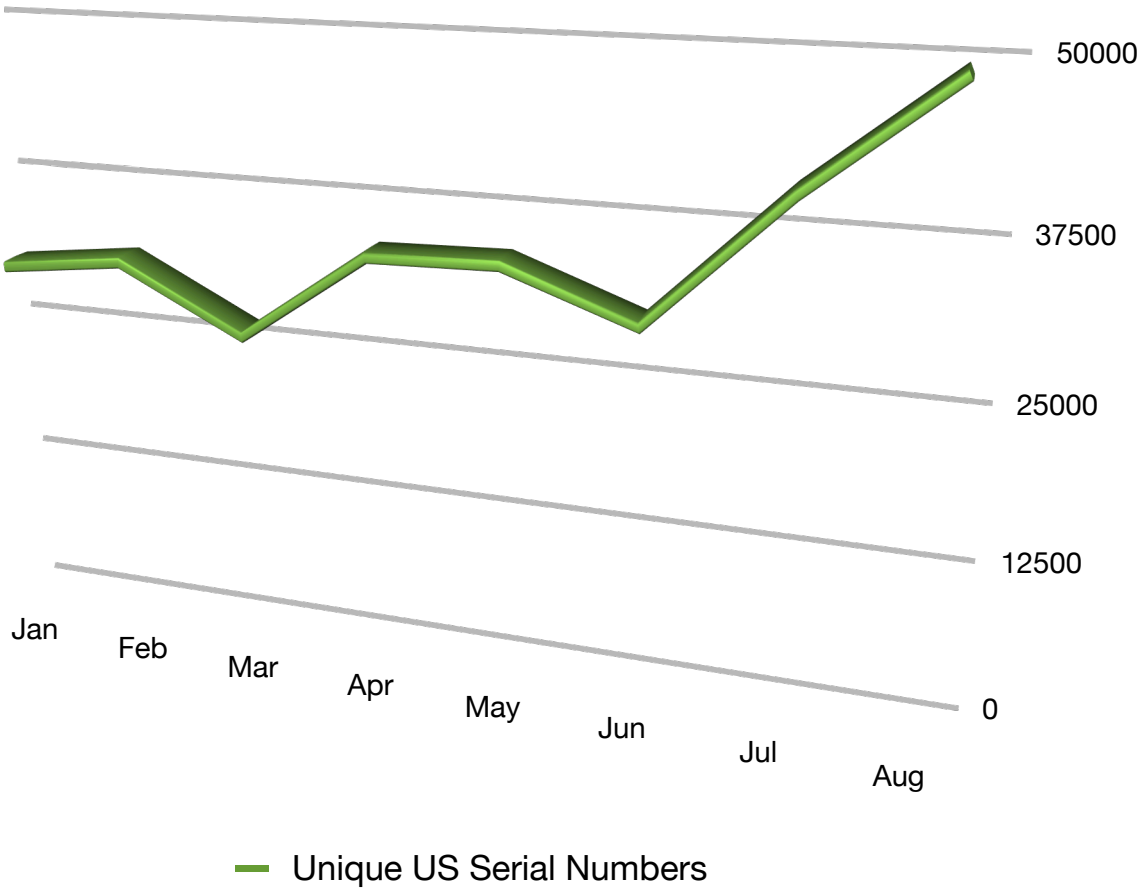
Investigators can download thirty minute movies complete with sound where an adult is forcibly penetrating a child. The user can listen to the child cry out for help as the video permanently memorializes each horrifying moment.

Problem Scope

The software used on this particular network maintains a unique serial number for each installed system. During undercover operations, investigators track these serial numbers to get a global perspective of individual users. Previously, investigators could only document the Internet Protocol addresses (IP) of these users, however, since IP addresses are dynamic and subject to frequent change, it is difficult to get a conclusive picture of the volume of individual trafficking.

With that in mind, the following chart represents the number of unique users identified trading child sexual abuse imagery in 2007. The numbers for each month represent one software application on one P2P network. These are only the U.S. offenders found by law enforcement during undercover operations.

Distinct P2P Use



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Unique US Serial Numbers	30817	32017	26976	34167	34443	30803	41073	49554

Unique Traders

In the chart labeled Distinct P2P use we can see that over forty-nine thousand unique systems were found trading child sexual abuse imagery in August, 2007. That number represents the latest statistics available at the time of this report and we can see a continuing trend in the increase of this activity even though law-enforcement has been trying to disrupt this system for three years.

The monthly totals listed only depict unique use during that month. In most cases these users were also reflected in prior months. A review of the complete seven month period reveals 193,626 unique computers in the United States located by law enforcement trafficking child sexual abuse imagery. This ability to track serial numbers was implemented in late 2005. Since that time we have identified 377,044 unique serial numbers related to this activity.

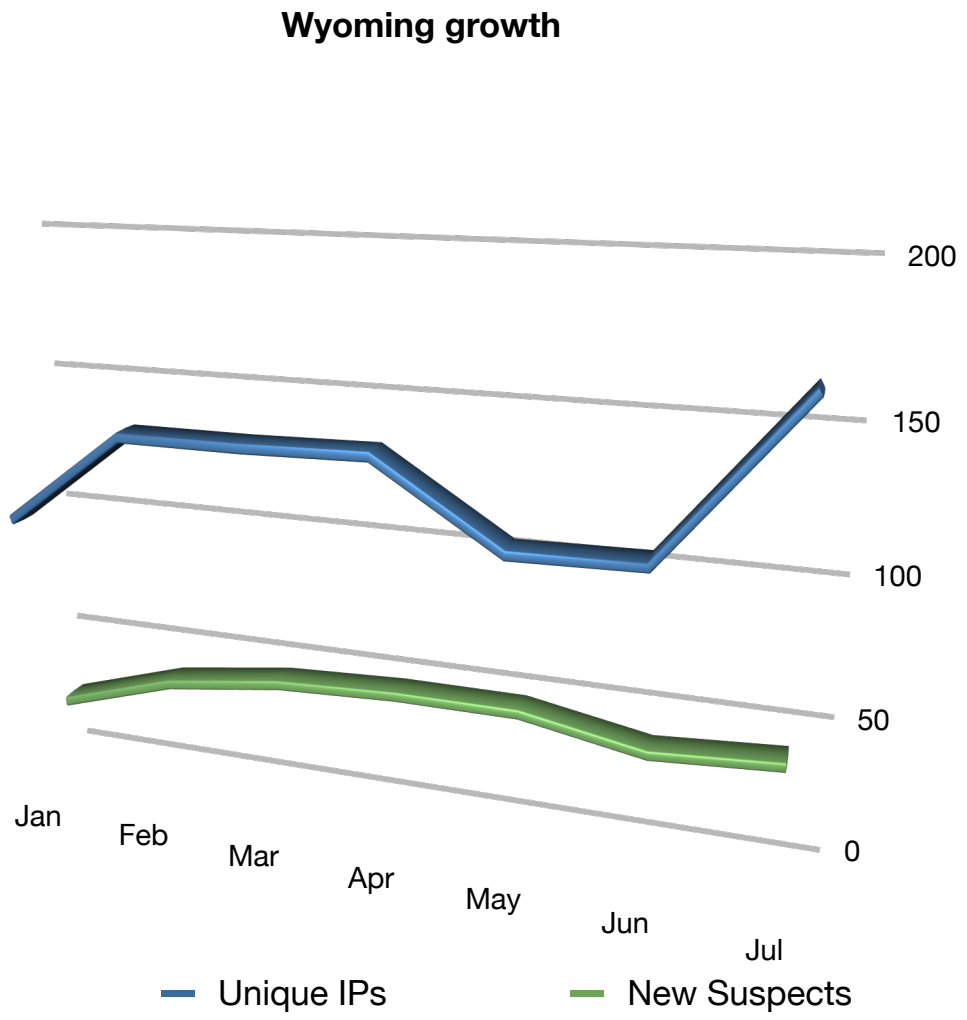
We should note that individuals using two computers or who purchase a new computer will be reflected twice in these numbers. Simply upgrading the software does not change this serial number for the application reported. In Wyoming, we have seen only two cases out of over 100 search warrants served where an individual had two serial numbers associated with their activity.

Impact

The impact of these traders on law enforcement's ability to respond has been catastrophic. This one small segment of the Internet has caused the investigative and forensic infrastructure to be overwhelmed. In Wyoming alone we are behind over eight hundred (800) search warrants. With Wyoming being the smallest state by population, it is not difficult to imagine how these offenses have crippled much larger jurisdictions.

Growth

In Wyoming we send process on each IP address found during these undercover operations. Resulting records allow us to match the number of new IP addresses to the number of new individuals trading child sexual abuse material in Wyoming.



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Cumula-tive
Unique IPs	107	139	139	140	113	114	169	921
New Suspects	29	42	48	50	50	42	45	306
% of Unique IPs	27.1%	30.2%	34.5%	35.7%	44.2%	36.8%	26.6%	33.2%

The steady increase in Wyoming has continued to tax an already overwhelmed system. We have specific records that demonstrate how many IP addresses refer to specific individuals. Over the first six months of 2007 we were able to show that the nine hundred twenty one (921) unique addresses related to three hundred and six (306) individuals.

There have been 1,519,791 unique IP addresses identified in the United States. If the breakdown were constant with the results in Wyoming that would indicate 504,947 individuals identified throughout the United States in the last three years. This is a rough estimate but again, it only pertains to one of many P2P systems and does not include other methods of trading child sexual abuse material.

Methodology

Conducting the undercover portion of these P2P operations is fairly simple. Investigators use the search terms known to law enforcement to identify advertised child sexual abuse material. The investigator then initiates downloads and starts to identify IP addresses. Be examining these addresses the investigator can see where an offender is located. This allows each investigator to focus their efforts within their own jurisdiction.

Once an offending computer has been identified in the local jurisdiction the investigator may download child pornography directly from the suspect computer. As this progresses the investigation is documented and memorialized through software applications. Investigators will also check the reported IP address for involvement in previous activities related to child sex crimes. Often records will be found associating the address with other investigations.

Once criminal conduct is confirmed the investigator sends process to the Internet Service Provider (ISP). This request will attempt to identify the physical address associated with the IP address. Most frequently this will match a residence or business with a paid Internet account. If the ISP has records the investigator can continue the investigation.

Investigators will then research the location provided, Investigators will attempt to identify the occupants as well as immediate risks to children. Criminal history information will be obtained if available to help establish the priority of the investigation.

Once all background material has been reviewed a decision to apply for a search warrant will be made. If a warrant is appropriate an application will be submitted to a local or federal prosecutor. If approved, the application then goes before the appropriate judge. If signed the investigators have a limited amount of time to execute the warrant and seize any evidence found.

Interviews may be conducted pursuant to the investigation. All digital evidence will be submitted for forensic examination. Depending on the evidence and the potential for risk to individuals an arrest may be made during the execution of the warrant.

Rescues

These P2P undercover investigations have resulted in the rescue of many children.