

PRESS RELEASE

New cybercrime report examines disturbing trends in commercial online child sex abuse

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The vast majority of child abuse material continues to be distributed for 'free' on the open net but the use of hidden services like TOR makes it increasingly difficult for law enforcement to identify perpetrators and networks behind the production and distribution of child sexual abuse material.

These findings, contained in the new *Strategic Assessment of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Online* by the European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) at Europol, were unveiled today at a meeting of the European Financial Coalition against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Online (EFC). It examines the disturbing trends in online child sex abuse and presents recommendations for law enforcement and their partners to prioritise activities to combat the sexual abuse and rape of children for profit.

A growing source of concern highlighted in the report is the new and disturbing money-making trend of sharing live streamed videos of the abuse and rape of children via the Internet. Organised criminal networks operating in Asia offer to rape children 'on demand' for perpetrators who view and direct the sexual assault in real-time. This crime poses new challenges for law enforcement as the 'evidence' to prove the crime is streamed and not captured anywhere.

Troels Oerting, Head of the European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) and present Chair of the EFC, said: "We need to keep pace with these sophisticated criminal networks that distribute child sexual abuse material via cyberspace to child molesters all over the world, including the EU. It always surprises me how the disgusting abuse of children for sex crimes continues to develop, and that creative cyber savvy criminals now offer secure means to distribute – even live - this awful material for money to a significant global customer base. Law enforcement needs to focus even more on this illegal use of the Internet and engage in systematic intelligence gathering, sharing, crime prevention and investigation. We owe this to the children who are betrayed by those they should normally be able to trust - the adults."

The key findings of the report published today include:

- The vast majority of child abuse material (CAM) is still distributed non-commercially on the open net, using peer-to-peer (P2P) technology. Commercial distribution persists, however, and is evolving, including new forms of activity on the hidden net
- The live streaming of abuse for payment is an emerging trend of particular concern, deserving of greater law enforcement attention, systematic intelligence gathering, and effective collaboration of prevention measures
- As an increasing number of young people use Internet-based services to produce sexualised content, there is a real risk that this material will find its way into commercial circulation
- Analysis of web search terms reveals a reduction in interest in traditionally popular 'series' of images, persistence

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in the popularity of generic keywords for child abusive material, and increased interest in 'borderline' and 'barely legal' material. While more sophisticated offenders use closed online networks to access CAM, web searches continue to provide 'entry level' means of access

- Web search analysis also reveals increasing interest in CAM in emerging markets such as Latin America. As Internet adoption continues to proliferate worldwide, the EFC expects to see new material, new payment methods and greater levels of interest from previously under-connected regions
- According to data provided by INHOPE, the top countries with the highest number of servers hosting commercially distributed CAM include the United States, Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Japan, Netherlands, Ukraine, Germany, Czech Republic and Hungary. For some of these – but not all – high levels of identified commercial CAM URLs may to some extent reflect the misuse of globally popular legitimate hosting services
- Analysis by the Internet Watch Foundation reveals that just eight Top Level Distributors were responsible for 513 commercial CAM distribution brands in 2012, and that the 10 most prolific brands recorded in 2012 were all associated with a single Top Level Distributor. This seems to indicate that, while there are large numbers of URLs being used for the commercial distribution of CAM, this may be due to a small number of extremely prolific Top Level Distributors.

The European Financial Coalition against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Online (EFC) brings together key actors from law enforcement, the private sector and civil society in Europe with the common goal of fighting the commercial sexual exploitation of children online. Members of the EFC join forces to take action on the payment and ICT systems that are used to run these illegal operations.

For further information:

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