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## **Operation Hydra Nets 28 Child Predators from 17 States; 19 Children Rescued**

The Montgomery County District Attorney's Office announced the results of a month's long operation targeting the distribution of child sexual abuse material on the internet. During "Operation Hydra," detectives rescued 19 children who had been sexually abused or exploited. Authorities identified, charged, and arrested 28 individuals with crimes related to the sexual exploitation of children. These defendants were from 17 states and made child sexual abuse material available in Montgomery County.

Over the last 12 months, detectives with the Montgomery County division of the Houston Metro Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force monitored chat groups on a popular social media application. The defendants were identified as participants in various group chats dedicated to distributing child sexual abuse material. Most of the defendants posted illicit images to the groups. Some defendants were administrators of the groups and controlled who could access the groups.

These cases underscore the fact that such crimes often cross jurisdictional boundaries, spanning counties, states, and even countries. Utilizing advanced investigative techniques, the team of detectives successfully identified and located the individuals involved, even though they were from other jurisdictions. Detectives worked with authorities in those jurisdictions to apprehend the defendants, demonstrating a commitment to collaboration and cooperation with other jurisdictions to ensure the safety of our community and particularly children. This operation is a stark reminder of the realities of child sexual exploitation and the proliferation of child sexual abuse material on the internet, and the need for proactive measures to address these crimes against our children.

Operation: Hydra was spearheaded by the Montgomery County Precinct 1 Constable's Office along with the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office. The operation was supported by Montgomery County Constables' Offices, Precinct 2, Precinct 3, Precinct 4 and Precinct 5, the Conroe Police Department, the Texas Department of Public Safety, Homeland Security Investigations, the U.S. Marshalls Service, and the Houston Metro Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

Assistant District Attorney Chris Seufert: "Heroes aren't only in movies. Right here in Montgomery County, real-life heroes are tirelessly fighting for our children's safety. To those who harm the innocent, beware-we will do whatever it takes to find those who harm the innocent."

District Attorney Brett Ligon: "The Internet allows child predators access and abuse children worldwide. My message to child abusers is clear: I don't care where you are. If you make these images available in my county or put children at risk, we will find you, and you will face justice."