



Fresno County Sheriff's Office

John Zanoni, Sheriff

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News Release

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“Operation Creeper Ban” Leads to the Arrests of 15 Sexual Predators

A total of 15 suspects, all men, have been arrested and booked into jail on various charges related to possessing and sharing Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) and arranging to meet with a child for sex. They range in age from 19 to 42. The arrests are a result of “Operation Creeper Ban”, which was a multi-agency operation conducted from June 9th – 13th, 2025. The majority of arrestees have since posted bond, been assigned a court date and released from custody.

The basis for launching this operation is that children’s use of electronic devices and social media is higher than ever. A potential danger of being online more often is having an encounter with a sexual predator who is seeking out relationships with children.

To combat the problem, detectives served 11 search warrants at homes where they had information on suspects possessing and sharing CSAM. This resulted in the arrest of 13 suspects from both Fresno and Madera Counties. Detectives seized a total of 61 electronic devices for further forensic examination. To take advantage of the additional dedicated resources, detectives also conducted 10 compliance checks of registered sex offenders.

During the course of the operation, detectives also posed as teenagers to use technology against predators to safeguard children. During the investigations, these suspects used sexually explicit language and sent graphic photos to the detective pretending to be a child. All of the suspects were first to express their sexual desires, and they initiated a time to meet with the detective posing as a child. Two suspects arrived at the locations and officers arrested them. No actual children were ever used or placed into danger.

Each year, the Central California Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force receives thousands of online CyberTip reports from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. These tips are related to the distribution and possession of CSAM. ICAC detectives are well-aware that suspects who view CSAM can easily progress into hands on crimes against children. The suspects contacted in “Operation Creeper Ban” are prime examples of how sexual behavior can escalate.

ICAC is comprised of 66 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies spread throughout nine counties in the Central Valley. It is dedicated to protecting children online and investigating crimes committed against children, which are facilitated by the internet and computer usage.

Law enforcement would like to remind the public to be vigilant when it comes to visiting websites and social media outlets. Parents should also monitor their children's internet usage and be aware of the software apps they are using. Parents should keep the dialogue open with their children in order to build trust. Online predators often pretend to be someone else in order to lure their victims in and take advantage of them. Teach children to be wary of the person on the other end of the chat line; many times, people are not who they say they are. Common apps used by suspects include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, Discord, Kik, MeetMe and Scout. Report any suspicious behavior right away to law enforcement or file a cyber tip through the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. <https://report.cybertip.org/>

If you have additional information related to the suspects arrested or any other illegal behaviors mentioned above, please report it to the Sheriff's Office at (559) 600-3111, Valley Crime Stoppers at (559) 498-7867, www.valleycrimestoppers.org You will remain anonymous and may be eligible for a cash reward.

Participants in the operation included members from the following - different local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

- Central California Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force
- Fresno County Sheriff's Office
- Fresno Police Department
- Fresno County Probation Adult Compliance Team (ACT)
- Madera County Sheriff's Office
- Kings County Sheriff's Office
- Clovis Police Department
- Kerman Police Department
- Fowler Police Department
- Sanger Police Department
- Kingsburg Police Department
- Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)

Suspects Arrested / Charges

1. Kristopher Zepeda, 37, of Fresno - Possession of CSAM (Current registered sex offender)
2. Ralph Contreras Jr., 39, of Chowchilla - Warrant for possession of CSAM
3. Clifton Ewing, 34, of Fresno - Arranging to meet with a minor for sex (bonded out)
4. Dominic Simonian, 25, of Fresno - Possession of CSAM (bonded out)
5. George Gutierrez, 42, of Fresno - Distributing obscene material to a minor (bonded out)
6. Branden Padgett, 36, of Fresno - Possession of CSAM (bonded out)
7. Ramon Rodriguez, 32, of Orange Cove - Possession of CSAM (bonded out)
8. Julian Dedrick, 32, of Clovis - Possession of CSAM
9. Joshua Schiro, 27, of Clovis - Possession of CSAM (bonded out)
10. John Jeffery, 19, of Clovis - Possession of CSAM
11. Gilbert Hinojosa, 36, of Clovis - Possession of CSAM (bonded out)
12. Ruben Lopez, 38, of Madera - Creating CSAM (bonded out)
13. Hugo Lopez Garzon, 31, of Madera - Distributing obscene material to a minor (bonded out)
14. Giovanni Acevedo, 21, of Madera - Possession of CSAM
15. Rudy Rosales Moreno, 20, of Sanger - Possession of CSAM (bonded out)