

# **Glen Carbon, Collinsville, Granite City Men Arrested: FBI Undercover Operation Leads To Federal Charges For 14 Attempting To Meet Minors For Sex**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS - U.S. Attorney Steven D. Weinhoeft and FBI Special Agent in Charge Sean M. Cox announced Wednesday that 14 men have been federally charged for attempting to engage in sexual activity with minors. The cases are the result of an FBI led operation involving multiple federal and state law enforcement agencies that

targeted online predators attempting to meet minors for sex. Over 50 law enforcement agents were involved in the operation.

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Over 50 law enforcement agents were involved in the operation. U.S. Attorney Steven Weinhoeft said, “Instead of lurking on playgrounds, modern predators hide behind electronic devices using social media and texting apps to access young children.”

Weinhoeft continued, “Serious dangers are no further away than a child’s cell phone or tablet, and we strongly urge parents to monitor their children’s online activity, be aware of who their children are talking with, and have conversations about how to stay safe online.”

SAC Cox echoed those remarks: “Over this past weekend, FBI Agents from Springfield and St. Louis partnered with law enforcement to conduct an operation to identify child predators. These are some of the most difficult, and yet the most important, investigations we work with our partners to make a positive impact in our communities and protect our children. In today’s world, children have a much larger presence on social media platforms than they had in the past, which places them at far greater risk of becoming a victim to online sexual predators. These arrests should serve as a reminder to parents everywhere of the importance of monitoring the computer usage of their children and staying active in their lives.”

During the two-day operation, undercover agents pretended to be minors in a variety of online texting, social media and message board platforms and apps. All of the defendants contacted these profiles online, engaged in sexually explicit discussions with the undercover agents and arrived at a residence with the intent to engage in sexual acts with minors. Some of the defendants also propositioned the undercover agents to send them pornographic photos, traveled across state lines for the purpose of illicit sexual activity with a minor, and/or offered to pay money to engage in sexual activity with a minor. All of the defendants were arrested after arriving at the undercover residence. Several defendants arrived with items intended for the fictitious minors, including alcohol, sex toys, lubricant, condoms, methamphetamine, and in one case, a dog leash and a dog collar with the name of the undercover profile engraved on it. No actual minors were harmed. All of the defendants were charged by criminal complaint between June 28-29, 2020.

U.S. Attorney Weinhoeft said, “Sex trafficking and child exploitation continue to impact our communities, and we will aggressively enforce the law against those who would prey upon children.”

The identities of the 14 people who were charged in the East St. Louis Division of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois, as well as their charges, are set out in the table below:

Name	Age	City	Charges
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Brett Brimberry	28,	Glen Carbon, IL.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor
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Richard L. Britt	38,	Granite City, IL.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor; Interstate Travel to Engage in Illicit Sexual Conduct
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Urich Gaines	32,	Belleville, IL.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor
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Kayln E. Hogatt	27	Bridgeport, IL.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor; Attempted Production of Child Pornography
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Kevin Kamler,	30,	O’Fallon, MO.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor
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Brian Lotz,	56,	Collinsville, IL.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor
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Anthony Parrish,	33,	Swansea, IL.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor
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Philip M. Reis,	55,	O’Fallon, IL.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor
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Gerald S. Sewell,	56,	Belleville, IL.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor; Interstate Travel to Engage in Illicit Sexual Conduct J
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James R. Sears,	35,	Bridgeport, IL.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor
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Travis Shubert,	29,	Granite City, IL.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor
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Preston Thomas,	57,	St. Louis, MO.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor
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Nicholas Wright,	35,	O’Fallon, MO.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor; Interstate Travel to Engage in Illicit Sexual Conduct; Attempted Sex Trafficking of a Child
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Vallie F. Zeller,	43,	St. Louis, MO.,	Attempted Enticement of a Minor; Interstate Travel to Engage in Illicit Sexual Conduct; Attempted Production of Child Pornography
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Between June 29-July 1, 2020, all 14 defendants will have an initial appearance in front of United States Magistrate Judges Mark Beatty or Gilbert Sison at the federal courthouse in East St. Louis.

*Each of the offenses is alleged to have occurred in Madison County, Illinois. If convicted, the defendants each face a minimum penalty of 10 years imprisonment and could receive as much as life behind bars. The offenses also carry a possible life term of supervised release and fines of up to \$250,000. Pending trial, all 14 defendants will be held without bond or released on electronic monitoring and other strict conditions mandated by the Adam Walsh Act.*