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## NEWS



## Pennsylvania Priest Charged With Child Exploitation Crimes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 25, 2014

JOHNSTOWN, Pa. — A Pennsylvania Roman Catholic priest was charged Thursday with engaging in illicit sexual conduct and possession of child pornography, U.S. Attorney David J. Hickton announced today. The investigation was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Pittsburgh.

Joseph D. Maurizio, Jr., 69, a priest of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, was charged by criminal complaint with engaging in illicit sexual activity in Central America, and with possessing child pornography at the rectory at Our Lady Queen of Angels Church. Maurizio made an initial appearance in federal court Thursday and was ordered held until his detention hearing on Monday.

According to the complaint, it is alleged that every year between 1999 and 2009 Maurizio traveled from Pennsylvania to Honduras to assist a non-profit organization that provides services to children there. Each trip lasted two to three weeks.

The HSI Pittsburgh Investigation that began in February revealed that during the timeframe in which he traveled to Honduras, Maurizio engaged in various and numerous unlawful sexual activities with minors. However, after the charged illicit sexual conduct occurred in March of 2009, Maurizio did not engage in any foreign travel again until July of 2011. From July 2011 through the present, foreign travel records indicate that Maurizio has made approximately 10 separate trips to various Central American countries. On September 12, search warrants were executed at the rectory at Our Lady Queen of Angels Church in Central City, Pennsylvania, and a farm owned by Maurizio in Windber. Dozens of pieces of evidence were seized from the rectory including four computers, a laptop, hundreds of CDs, a loose hard drive, camera, floppy disks, thumb drives, VHS tapes and media cards. Suspected Images of child pornography were found on the loose hard drive.

HSI requests that anyone with information about this person contact the agency by calling the 24-hour HSI Tip line at 1-866-DHS-2ICE. The public can also submit an online tip at [www.ice.gov/tips/](http://www.ice.gov/tips/) or by downloading the Operation Predator [smartphone app](#) and submitting a tip via the app. All tips will remain anonymous.

U.S. Attorney Hickton commended HSI Pittsburgh for their investigation in this case and encouraged citizens with information to call the Tip line or submit a tip online or through the app.

This investigation was conducted under HSI's [Operation Predator](#), an international initiative to protect children from sexual predators. Since the launch of Operation Predator in 2003, HSI has arrested more than 10,000 individuals for crimes against children, including the production and distribution of online child pornography, traveling overseas for sex with minors, and sex trafficking of children. In fiscal year 2013, more than 2,000 individuals were arrested by HSI special agents under this initiative.

HSI encourages the public to report suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free Tip Line at 1-866-DHS-2-ICE or by completing its [online tip form](#). Both are staffed around the clock by investigators. Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, via its toll-free 24-hour hotline, 1-800-THE-LOST.

For additional information about wanted suspected child predators, download HSI's Operation Predator [smartphone app](#) or visit the online [suspect alerts page](#). HSI is a founding member and current chair of the [Virtual Global Taskforce](#), an international alliance of law enforcement agencies and private industry sector partners working together to prevent and deter online child sexual abuse.

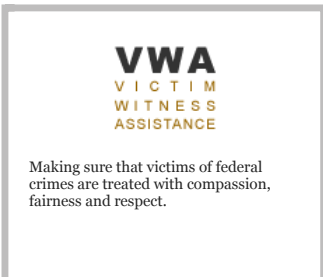
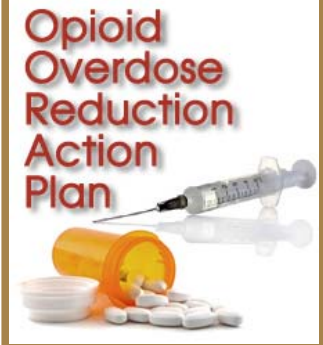
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