

## Pentagon Child Porn Scandal: Security Agencies Were Left At Risk, Investigators Say

By ANNE FLAHERTY 07/23/10 04:26 PM ET EDT

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WASHINGTON -- A major federal investigation has found that dozens of military officials and defense contractors, including some with top-level security clearances, allegedly bought and downloaded child pornography on private or government computers.

The Pentagon on Friday released investigative reports spanning almost a decade that implicated individuals working with agencies handling some of the nation's most closely guarded secrets, including the National Security Agency and the National Reconnaissance Office, which operates U.S. spy satellites.

Defense workers who purchased child porn put the Department of Defense, "the military and national security at risk by compromising computer systems, military installations and security clearances," a 2007 investigative report said.

The suspects also put the Defense Department "at risk of blackmail, bribery, and threats," one report added. The reports, however, do not point to any specific security breaches.

The Boston Globe disclosed the results of the investigations on Friday after obtaining the documents through the Freedom of Information Act. The Defense Department released the reports, which are heavily redacted, with most names and details about each case omitted.

Several suspects were convicted and sentenced to prison terms of up to about five years and ordered to pay hefty fines – including one of \$150,000. But several suspects identified by investigators were never prosecuted.

In a Virginia case, a contractor working for the National Security Agency was indicted on child pornography charges but fled the country and is believed to be hiding in Libya.

According to federal investigators, a computer repair shop had alerted the police after finding "thousands of possible child pornography images" on a hard drive brought in by a man who worked for the Naval Air Warfare Center in China Lake, Calif. The suspect died of pulmonary disease in 2009 before he could be charged, a report said.

In June 2003, a technician checking for a computer virus discovered what appeared to be child pornography on the computer of a contractor for the Security and Intelligence Directorate of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA, in Arlington, Va.

Because none of the children in the images could be identified, as required for prosecution through the Federal system, the U.S. Attorney's Office declined to take action.

One case in California involved more than a dozen individuals with ties to the Defense

Department, including contractors and active members of the military – several of whom had top secret clearances. At least nine cases were closed because investigators lacked "current, relevant evidence," the documents state.

Because many important details are blacked out in the documents, it is impossible to determine precisely how many individuals with ties to the Pentagon were either charged with or suspected of receiving child pornography.

The federal investigation of military workers was part of a broader effort initiated in 2007 under the code name "Operation Flicker." That project had identified more than 5,000 individuals who subscribed to child pornography websites.