

# U.S. MARSHALS OPERATION



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## **MORE THAN 1,100 SEX OFFENDER ARRESTS BY U.S. MARSHALS'** **"OPERATION FALCON II"**

### *Among 9,037 Fugitives Apprehended in Nationwide Operation*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales and United States Marshals Service (USMS) Director John F. Clark announced that a seven-day nationwide fugitive roundup led by the USMS and hundreds of partners from state, local and other federal agencies led to the arrests of 9,037 individuals. Among those arrested during Operation FALCON II were 1,102 violent sexual offenders, the largest number ever captured in a single law enforcement effort. Operation FALCON II was conducted from April 17 through April 23, 2006.

FALCON II (Federal and Local Cops Organized Nationally) was conducted in 27 states mostly west of the Mississippi River, and the territories of Guam and Northern Mariana Islands. High-priority targets for arrest were fugitives wanted for committing sexual offenses and crimes of violence against women, children and the elderly, as well as unregistered convicted sex offenders. Other priority targets were fugitive gang members and violent offenders wanted for homicide, kidnapping, robbery, burglary, carjacking, weapons offenses, and major narcotics distribution.

"The Justice Department is pursuing our Nation's worst fugitives," said Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. "Operation FALCON again was successful at apprehending violent offenders, sexual predators, drug dealers, and gang members who had for too long escaped the grip of justice. With these criminals off the streets, fewer Americans will live with the threat of violent crime in their communities."

William Wisham is a textbook case of what can go wrong when a community is not aware that a convicted sexual predator is in its midst. Wisham had failed to register as a sex offender when he moved to a motel in Victorville, Calif. On April 21, investigators assigned to Operation FALCON encountered Wisham at the motel during the unrelated arrest of two individuals wanted for child endangerment. The investigators learned Wisham had violated his requirement to register as a sex offender. Furthermore, he possessed letters to children, notes explaining why he enjoys sex with children, child pornography, candy and methamphetamine. Authorities are working to find and evaluate children listed in Wisham's diary-style notes. Initial investigations indicated Wisham, using candy as a lure, violated at least one minor child.

"During each day of FALCON II we put more than 2,100 law enforcement officers on the street to arrest individuals like Wisham," said USMS Director Clark. "The only way to achieve huge arrest statistics like these is with the full and enthusiastic cooperation of agencies at every level of government. I'm deeply grateful for their efforts."

For this seven-day nationwide operation, the Marshals coordinated officers from 120 state agencies, 330 county agencies, 312 police departments, 6 foreign law enforcement agencies, and 24 other federal agencies.

In one of the first arrests during FALCON II, investigators apprehended Herbert Damwijk in Oahu, Hawaii. Damwijk was wanted for two counts of child rape and child molestation against eight-year-old girls. Authorities in his home state of Washington contacted FALCON II investigators in Seattle for help in finding and capturing Damwijk. Their investigators developed leads that traced the fugitive into Oregon, and later to Hawaii. On April 17, FALCON II investigators in Hawaii arrested Damwijk at his father's residence in Oahu, Hawaii. He currently awaits extradition back to Washington State.

“Thankfully, none of the officers involved in apprehending these dangerous fugitives were seriously injured,” said Robert J. Finan II, the Marshals’ Assistant Director for Investigations. Finan praised two federal participants that focused expertise and resources on FALCON II. “We appreciate the strong efforts relating to drug and weapons seizures and gang violence that came from our partners in the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.” Assistant Director Finan further recognized the efforts of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which worked closely with USMS to identify high-priority cases in which convicted sex offenders had failed to register as required by law.

Other federal agents who participated came from the Offices of Inspector General of the Social Security Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Agriculture. Thanks to the efforts of USMS personnel overseas, fugitives who had fled the jurisdiction of the U.S. were targeted by Deputy Marshals and Special Agents of the State Department’s Diplomatic Security Service. Seven arrests were made abroad, and three foreign fugitives arrested in the U.S. will be returned to Mexico.

## **PHOTOS/VIDEOS AVAILABLE**

The Marshals Service has photos of actual arrests during the Operation available to press at [www.usmarshals.gov/falcon2](http://www.usmarshals.gov/falcon2), as well as factsheets on arrests nationwide and in each of the participating districts. Dossiers on the “FALCON 15,” describing 15 of the most significant cases closed during the Operation are available to media at the site. A ten-minute B-roll video package for broadcasters will be available for satellite distribution on April 27, at 2:30 – 2:45 pm EDT (11:30 – 11:45 am PDT) at C-Band coordinate IA 6 T-17 Downlink Frequency 4040 V 93 degrees WL, and at 6:30 – 6:45 pm EDT (3:30 – 3:45 pm PDT), and 10:00 – 10:15 pm EDT (7:00 – 7:15 pm PDT) at C-Band coordinate IA 6 T-16 Downlink Frequency 4020 H 93 degrees WL.

## **PARTICIPATING AGENCIES**

A complete list of all federal, state and local agencies that participated in Operation FALCON II is available at the Marshals Service website, [www.usmarshals.gov/falcon2](http://www.usmarshals.gov/falcon2)

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