



August 10, 2016

News

No Way Out

Recent death of a veteran prosecutor highlights trend of suicide by child porn suspects.

By Stephen Dark @stephendark

Like 14

Tweet

Favorite

Share



Shortly after 6 a.m. on Friday, May 6, 2016, Salt Lake County District Attorney Sim Gill received a call from the Utah Attorney General's Office. Their Internet Crimes Against Children taskforce was serving a search warrant for child pornography at the home of one of his veteran prosecutors and most-trusted subordinates, Chad Platt.

Gill put Platt on administrative leave and emailed his staff, saying that they were to have no communication with him. Then, he and a deputy tried to contact Platt by phone—initially without success. The following day, Gill and Platt talked. Gill says he wanted to make sure Platt was in "a safe place," which he said he was, and to tell him, "We'll get through this."

Platt had a bright future at the DA's. The one-time head of the asset-forfeiture unit was being mentored by Gill to be the office's legislative liaison at the end of 2016. More than most men who find themselves under investigation by ICAC, Platt knew what awaited him in terms of

prosecution and incarceration if they found child porn, and also knew, if they didn't, the grim cloud that would be cast over his life.

The Monday morning after the search warrant, at 5:30 a.m., Platt jumped off the parking tower by the DA's offices he was now barred from entering.

City Weekly requested a copy of the search warrant, only to be informed by the Attorney General that there was an ongoing investigation and releasing it "would create a danger of depriving a person of a right to a fair trial or impartial hearing." Despite the presumed target of the investigation being dead, Attorney General spokesman Daniel Burton declined to comment on who the investigation was now focused on.

Platt joined a long list of individuals who have killed themselves at the onset of a child sexual-abuse investigation, which can include viewing, possessing, distributing or producing child porn.

Whether Platt was falsely or mistakenly suspected or actively involved in some aspect of child porn, the probability of such suspects committing suicide is hardly news to law enforcement. In a 2013 FBI handbook titled, *Operational Safety Considerations While Investigating Child Sex Offenders*, the authors note that in a 2005 study of 95 child sex offenders, 15 percent killed themselves—a massive 183 times higher than the general population. An FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit's examination of 106 such offenders who took their own lives found that over a quarter did so within the first 48 hours of learning they were the target of an investigation.

"I think folks who kill themselves rather than face the personal and public humiliation and putting their families through the public humiliation of investigations, media attention, trials, incarceration, etc., really do feel there is no way out and death may be better than the pain that they will experience and cause their loved ones to experience upon exposure," longtime sex-offender therapist and licensed clinical social worker Molly Prince writes in an email.

These suspects are “parents and husbands, many of whom have been leading another life—a productive life.” —Ex-FBI agent Sonja Nordstrom

[click to tweet](#)

Such suicides, however, leave relatives scrambling to pick up the pieces from both learning about their loved ones' terrible secrets and their deaths. It also means that the veracity of the original suspicions remained unaddressed, and society, the suspect and his victims—assuming the accusations have some merit—are denied their day in court.

For many, though, such suspects are little more than "throw-away people," who did the state, the taxpayer and society a favor by ending their lives.

Elizabeth Hunt is a veteran criminal defense attorney. "I think many people may well think it is good for child porn defendants to kill themselves," she says. "They and all accused child molesters are in a class of people it is generally acceptable to hate. By the mere allegation, people in such cases are trapped in amber doing the worst thing they have done in their lives, whether they did it or not."

DEADLY SECRET

The FBI handbook focuses on protecting agents from the unpredictable actions of suspects they might tend to view as non-threatening. But do governmental agencies have a responsibility to protect those they have targeted, along with their possible victims, from their actions in the aftermath of an investigation being triggered? DA Gill thinks so, citing how his office raised the bail on alleged rapist and Utah GOP activist Greg Peterson to \$2 million in an attempt to protect both his victims and Peterson himself. Peterson nevertheless raised \$175,000, Gill recalls, got out of jail and took his own life.

"I think that unless someone is arrested and put on suicide watch, that there is nothing that can be done to assure they don't go down that road, especially if they don't voice those intentions to someone to know they need help," Prince says in an email. "Because unless someone has reason to believe the person is suicidal, there cannot be a legal method to take them to a facility for suicide watch and therapy to help them through the situation."

Men who find themselves the target of child porn investigations are rarely afforded the protection of suicide watch at the jail, as many are neither charged nor arrested after the search warrant has been concluded, says former FBI agent Sonja Nordstrom.

"I'm not trying to destroy people, I'm trying to get evidence, get in, control, de-escalate, do what we need and get out," Nordstrom says about serving search warrants. "It's highly emotional, a secret that's been held for decades. Very often it impacts families who are completely blindsided." These suspects are "parents and husbands, many of whom have been leading another life—a productive life."

Nordstrom says she doesn't recall a specific protocol with regard to addressing the mental health of suspects served with search warrants, but that her office did treat each warrant "as a potentially dangerous situation. We would ask if they had weapons in the home, we would ask if they would give them to friends, and we would ask if they had people that were helpful to them." She continues that they would discuss how the suspect was feeling, and "talk them through it to a degree, explain how this would work."

The delay between warrant execution and arrest, if there is one, can be considerable. The feds "execute the warrant, seize the evidence, evaluate it, put a case together, get an indictment and make an arrest," Nordstrom says. "It does not happen in two days."

Platt's brother told a KTVX Channel 4 reporter that no evidence of child porn was found at his house. The reporter then argued that may have been why Platt wasn't arrested, a leap that Nordstrom finds questionable. While several defense attorneys *City Weekly* spoke to argue that ICAC's search warrants can be flawed because they are based on IP addresses that can be inaccurate or bogus, Nordstrom says the majority of the child porn search warrants she served resulted in her leaving a suspect's house having found evidence against him, but not yet ready to make an arrest.

"VIRTUOUS PEDOPHILES"

City Weekly requested interviews with both the FBI and ICAC, but they were denied. Neither agency responded to requests for the numbers of suicides by child porn suspects in the last five years. While a FBI spokesperson emailed that the agency worked with "local partners" to help at-risk suspects get help, given the fact that anything a suspect says to law enforcement could be used against them suggests they would be unlikely to take up such offers.

Prince argues that if someone under investigation for this type of crime "knew they could talk to someone safely about their situation and fears, it would help immensely." However, she notes, that mandatory reporting laws mean that a therapist learning of someone who has committed, or plans to commit, crimes against children must inform authorities.

If a suicidal suspect, Prince says, "were to contact a therapist trained in sex-offender work as well as knowledgeable about the law, then they could be educated on the realities of the situation they are facing." They could also be "supported emotionally with the idea that while they have, indeed, done something very offensive to society, and against the law, in many cases [their] loved ones will choose to be a support for them."

Prince points to Massachusetts-based nonprofit "Stop It Now!" as offering a possible model of help. Set up in 1992, it uses marketing, online resources and public policy to try to help stop child sexual abuse. Along with providing a hotline for confidential guidance and support, Stop It Now! works with a high-tech company which ensures that when some search terms are entered seeking child porn, ads for Stop It Now! pop up. Its U.K. arm has a self-help program called Croga, which provides a workbook for adults at risk of abusing minors. There's also links to resources such as Virtuous Pedophiles, a website by and for "adults who are struggling with impulses and attractions but are committed to never acting on them," says Stop It Now! director Jenny Coleman.



THE POSSIBILITY OF REDEMPTION

While Platt's relatives, colleagues and friends wait for the Attorney General's Office to conclude its investigation, the dark shadow over Platt's memory remains. The doubts and questions that surround the execution of such a search warrant arguably never quite fade away, something that's even truer for the family of the dead man.

Former Salt Lake City Justice Court Judge Virginia Ward learned in February 2013 from a South Salt Lake detective working with ICAC that her 43-year-old husband Jason Dryer was the subject of a child porn investigation. She followed police instructions, ordered him out of

their home and refused to talk to him. Dryer was interviewed at the police station, and after he was released, drove up into the mountains, ran a pipe from the exhaust into his car, and killed himself.

Ward believes her husband was guilty, but because of her position—one she subsequently resigned from after she was arrested in April 2013 for distributing pain pills—there was a delay in charging Dryer as charges couldn't be screened at Salt Lake County.

"I wanted to hand it off to the legal system and not be the judge, and that process failed me. How did I know he might kill himself? I wasn't in the frame of mind to say, 'You'll get counseling and get through this.'"

Ward says after she was charged and did a brief stint in jail, she found the first steps toward redemption working at nonprofit Journey of Hope with women released from prison. "I got to earn trust and respect again by helping others." Her husband's suicide denied him the possibility of such a journey.

Several years on, she would hope that someone in her husband's or Platt's position, would have reached out to a group such as Stop It Now!, and been told, she says, "It's not all over, you can get redemption, you can get to a place where you'll be OK."

As it is, she, her two daughters and Dryer's two sons by a prior marriage are "going to have to live with this forever." Ward's oldest daughter told her, Ward says, that she wanted people like her father charged immediately, rather than have to live under the terrifying cloud of suspicion. "She has always been quite clear that anyone can ask for forgiveness," Ward says.
CW

[Like 14](#) [Tweet](#) [Favorite](#) [Share](#)

Tags: News

« Toxic Times |

Rocky, the Big Tipper »

[More News »](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR





Stephen Dark

sdark@cityweekly.r
@stephendark

Follow 264 followers

LATEST IN NEWS

Biskupski: The First Year

Milestones, missteps line the mayor's first 366 days in office.

by Dylan Woolf Harris

The Price of Intimacy

A disabled man's fight to legalize sex work in Utah veers into stormy waters.

by Stephen Dark

A Place of Prayer and Action

A Thanksgiving visit to Standing Rock reveals multigenerational resiliency.

by Lori A. Wagner

[More »](#)

MORE BY STEPHEN DARK

Bad Day at Red Rock

Moab's former city manager sues alleging she was fired for being a whistleblower on troubled police dept.

by Stephen Dark

Pronounced Echo

Deaths of homeless in supportive housing speak volumes of Utah's overburdened system.

by Stephen Dark

The Price of Intimacy

A disabled man's fight to legalize sex work in Utah veers into stormy waters.

by Stephen Dark

[More »](#)

COMMENTS

Showing **1-1** of 1

[Add a comment](#)

Sad we all can't see that what ever the human error, forgiveness is the key to both sides. I am a survivor of incest . I was angry for a long time, as were others that did not believe me. In the end me forgiving the family member brought me peace.

report

4 likes, 2 dislikes  like  dislike

Posted by **Lisa 1** on 08/10/2016 at 6:20 PM 

Subscribe to this thread:

[By Email](#)

[With RSS](#)

Showing **1-1** of 1

Subscribe to this thread

Post Comment

City Weekly Tix

City Weekly Store

Utah Service M

Powered by



Salt Lake City Weekly

Sync the schedule:



ADD TO CALENDAR



WED | 18 JAN

Utah at Washington State
(Men's Basketball)

9:00 PM

Utah Utes

THU | 19 JAN

BYU vs. Pepperdine
Basketball)

9:00 PM

BYU Cougars

READERS ALSO LIKED...

Armed Resistance

A new report links Utah legislator to patriot groups

by Eric Ethington

Speaking of Wilderness

John Worlock's three-minute segment on KRCL 90.9 FM is an enviro mainstay

by Colby Frazier

Promotions

EVENTS

(<http://www.cityweekly.net/utah/Events>)

The Artifacts

Metro Music Hall | Salt Lake City, UT

THU
19

(<http://www.cityweekly.net/utah/Events/ARTIFACTS/3069629/2017-01-19T20>)

Indiana Bones: Raiders of the Wall ...

Desert Star Playho... | Murray, UT

WED
18

(<http://www.cityweekly.net/utah/Events/BONES-RAIDERS-OF-THE-WALL-MART/3126706/2017-01-18T00>)





PRAHEALTHSCIENCES

**Are You a Healthy, Non-Smoking Man
Between 18 and 45 Years Old?**

*Find Out if You Qualify for an Investigational
Study (#130) at PRA Health Sciences.*

*Qualified Study Participants May Receive
Compensation up to \$2,000.*

801-269-8200

THE SOCIAL





Best Friends

@JessicaClackum What a cutie! Thank you for all that you do to help animals in need. You help make a difference!
^EW



09:10AM



Best Friends

@hungryveganxo Thanks for sharing and supporting homeless pets. Together, we can #SaveThemAll! ^EW

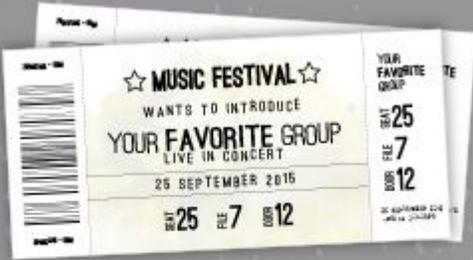


09:08AM



Best Friends

@Andressa_Leto Agreed! Thanks for sharing and helping Chief. Together, we can Save Them All! ^EW



☆ MUSIC FESTIVAL ☆
WANTS TO INTRODUCE
YOUR FAVORITE GROUP
LIVE IN CONCERT
25 SEPTEMBER 2015
SEAT 25 FILE 7 DOOR 12

YOUR FAVORITE GROUP
SEAT 25
FILE 7
DOOR 12

PARROTIX

I got my tix. I got my tix

LCR Health 



3 Signs You May Have Fatty Liver

[\[Watch Now \]](#)

The root of all your stomach problems 



*Watch Shocking
Presentation*

 NUCIFIC

SALT LAKE
CITY WEEKLY
STAFF SOCIAL



Salt Lake City Weekly

Like

Check in with the hosts of the interview-themed podcast Your Cre8tivity: [\(Your Cre8tivity\)](#)

24 MIN AGO



SaltLake City Weekly

A roundup of winter warmers to try this season ow.ly/KitK3086sxC

