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THE NATION

## U.S. Plans to Escalate Porn Fight

**Justice Department hire of a veteran prosecutor answers criticism from Christian conservatives who have long sought a crackdown on smut.**

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WASHINGTON — The Justice Department has quietly installed an outspoken anti-pornography advocate in a senior position in its criminal division, as part of an effort to jump-start obscenity prosecutions.

The Bush administration's election-year move follows three years of heat from the Christian right, which believes that Atty. Gen. John Ashcroft, a longtime friend and ally, has fallen down on the job when it comes to fighting smut.

Now, the appointment of a tough new cop on the porn beat and other recent moves by the department to bolster obscenity cases are galvanizing conservatives, while leaving representatives of the adult-entertainment industry to wonder whether they have become a political football.

Officials said the appointment of Bruce A. Taylor, who worked in the department during the heyday of its anti-porn efforts in the late 1980s and early '90s, shows that Justice is serious about cracking down on porn after what critics called lax enforcement by the Clinton administration.

In his resume, the 53-year-old Taylor, who got his start as a Cleveland city attorney in the 1970s, lists his involvement in more than 600 obscenity cases as a prosecutor or a legal

advisor.

The defendants in those cases constitute a who's-who of adult-entertainment industry tycoons, including Hustler magazine publisher Larry Flynt and Reuben Sturman, a onetime comic-book salesman turned porn magnate.

In a survey two years ago, Adult Video News, a trade publication based in Chatsworth, identified Taylor as one of the top "enemies" of the industry. The story was titled: "These Are the Folks Who Want to Put You Out of Business."

Taylor, who in recent years has headed a conservative advocacy group fighting for tougher regulation of the Internet, has been given the title of "senior counsel" within the criminal division at Justice, with a focus principally on federal adult obscenity issues.

The department's obscenity chief, Andrew Oosterbaan, who has been drawing much of the flak from conservatives, will retain his position. But instead of reporting to him, Taylor will answer to a more senior-level assistant attorney general.

Bryan Sierra, a Justice spokesman, said that by hiring Taylor — which the department didn't publicize but confirmed when asked by The Times — the department was simply marshaling additional resources rather than undercutting anyone's authority or submitting to political pressure.

"Bruce has vast experience, both at the federal and state level, prosecuting those kinds of cases," Sierra said. "It is all part of our overall effort to kick-start obscenity prosecutions after a long absence."

Sierra said Taylor was unavailable for comment.

The department has made other moves recently to shore up its anti-porn effort, including assigning for the first time in years a team of FBI agents to focus exclusively on adult-obscenity cases.

In his fiscal 2005 budget proposal released this month, President Bush sought increased spending to fight obscenity; it was one of the few spending increases — besides for anti-terrorist efforts — in the otherwise austere proposal.

Porn industry representatives said all the activity had the look of an administration trying hard to appease an important constituency during an election cycle.

"This is a crude, crass political effort," said Jeffrey Douglas, executive director of the Free Speech Coalition, a trade association for the adult-entertainment industry.

He questioned whether the public at large was as interested in cracking down on adult fare as the Justice Department and said the hiring of Taylor was "a very dangerous, disturbing step" toward infringement on free speech.

Some defense lawyers say Taylor's record in court has been a decidedly mixed bag. His first case against Sturman, the erstwhile comic-book salesman, resulted in a hung jury. A few years ago, he was brought in to act as a special prosecutor in a case against an adult bookstore operator in South Bend, Ind.; the defendant was acquitted. Some of the Internet legislation he has pushed in recent years has been roundly rejected by the U.S. Supreme Court as violating the 1st Amendment.

But conservative activists said the moves in the Justice Department were long overdue. They have been unhappy because, with funds limited for purposes other than the war on terrorism, the department has been targeting only purveyors of the worst forms of sexually explicit material — such as that involving simulated violence. One such pending case is against a North Hollywood film distributor known as Extreme Associates.

Anti-porn groups have argued that this tack misses the largest distributors and the bulk of the problem, including the growth of pornography over the Internet. They are looking to Taylor to launch a tough enforcement era.

"He believes in taking on big cases that will have a major impact," said Patrick Trueman, an advisor to the Family Research Council who headed the Justice Department's anti-pornography unit in the 1980s and was once Taylor's boss. "They are bringing him in for the same reason I did: They want to win, and he is the most experienced guy."

In the 1980s, Taylor was the lawyer for an anti-porn group known as Citizens for Decency Through Law, which was founded by Charles Keating, who later became embroiled in the savings-and-loan scandals and went to jail.

Over the years, Taylor has advised scores of attorneys around the country on the niceties of obscenity law, and two years ago was invited by the Justice Department to participate in a training symposium for new prosecutors.

He maintains a collection of legal papers from pornography cases that covers "every brief in every case," according to Trueman.

Most recently, he has been the president and chief counsel of the National Law Center for Children and Families, a Fairfax, Va., group active in writing federal legislation outlawing indecent material on the Internet as well as fighting child exploitation.

Among the supporters of his law center is Cincinnati billionaire and philanthropist Carl Lindner, who in the early 1990s gained additional celebrity by helping lead the opposition to a local exhibit of sexually explicit work by photographer Robert Mapplethorpe.

Lindner gave Taylor's group \$100,000 in 2002, according to federal tax records.

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