



Prosecuting Nihilistic Violent Extremism

An Examination of Federal and State Charges
Against 764 and Related Networks

December 20, 2025

COLLABORATING RESEARCH TEAM LEADS

Youth Mobilization

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In April 2025, U.S. authorities arrested two alleged leaders of 764, a 21-year-old U.S. citizen residing in Greece and a 20-year-old U.S. citizen from North Carolina. They were arrested on charges of operating an international child-exploitation enterprise, in connection with the online terrorist network ‘764’.ⁱ US Attorney General Pamela Bondi described the group as “one of the most heinous online child exploitation enterprises we have ever encountered – a network built on terror, abuse, and the deliberate targeting of children”.ⁱⁱ The arrests marked a significant development in federal efforts to disrupt and dismantle the network, while simultaneously underscoring the scale of the problem. In December 2025, the FBI reported that it was actively conducting more than 350 investigations connected to 764 and other nihilist violent extremist (NVE) groups, while the number of victims is estimated to reach into the thousands globally and new cases continue to emerge.ⁱⁱⁱ Internationally, Canada is the first country to officially designate 764 as a terrorist entity under its Criminal Code thereby granting authorities expanded legal tools to disrupt their activities.^{iv} In the absence of a similar U.S. designation, prosecutors are limited in the types of charges that can be applied to offenders. This 764 research report briefly describes the nature of this emergent threat, including its origin, structure and ideology, and summarizes the current state of federal charges in the U.S. linked to 764.

NATURE OF THE THREAT

764 is an emerging threat that blends violent extremism, child sexual exploitation, cyber- and organized-crime. The network primarily employs sextortion tactics, including coercion, psychological manipulation, and enticement commonly leading to an escalating and self-perpetuating cycle of harm. Members deliberately target young and often vulnerable individuals on publicly available platforms, coercing them into recording or live-streaming acts of self-harm and sexually explicit behavior, including the production of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). The resulting material is subsequently distributed among the network to facilitate further extortion and to reinforce control over the victims.^v Both the victims and perpetrators of 764 tend to be young. Victims are typically aged between 11 and 17, although cases involving children as young as 6 have been reported while most perpetrators are under the age of 25, many are under the age of 18.^{vi}

764 presents new challenges to U.S. law enforcement and prosecutors seeking to deter and disrupt the network, which presents unique challenges to traditional systems used to counter more conventional violent extremist organizations. In response, NCITE researchers constructed a dataset comprising criminal charges, federal and state, in connection with 764 (and NVE more broadly) as part of a larger research portfolio examining emerging threats. The research team is examining the mobilization pathways of 764 members and challenges faced by law enforcement and prosecutors seeking to disrupt and dismantle the network. NCITE is working closely with end-users across the counterterrorism workforce to translate the research for practice.

ORIGIN OF 764

764 was founded in January of 2021 by a 15-year-old teenager in Texas named Bradley Cadenhead, who had previously interacted with members of the precursor groups CVLT (pronounced “cult”) and

“Greggy's Cult”.^{vii} Named after part of Cadenhead’s zip code, 764 under his leadership operated primarily on Discord, within an online, decentralized network of related groups called The Community (often referred to as “The Com”).^{viii}

Cadenhead established practices for 764 which draw heavily from the tactics of CVLT and Greggy’s Cult. CVLT and Greggy’s Cult were some of the earliest known networks to systematically target minors and weaponize exploitation, sextortion, forced self-harm and other violent acts as part of a broader strategy of accelerating societal collapse.^{ix} Court records identify the crossover in membership between 764, CVLT, and Greggy’s Cult.^x

STRUCTURE AND IDEOLOGY

764 is arguably the most notorious network within the Com and broader NVE ecosystem. The Department of Justice defines NVEs as those who “engage in criminal conduct within the United States and abroad, in furtherance of political, social, or religious goals that derive primarily from a hatred of society at large and a desire to bring about its collapse by sowing indiscriminate chaos, destruction, and social instability. NVEs demand, coerce, and extort victims to engage in variety of violent conduct, including self-mutilation, online and in-person sexual acts, harm to animals, sexual exploitation of siblings and others, acts of violence, threats of violence, suicide, and murder”.^{xi} These goals are accomplished by systematically targeting and grooming minors and other vulnerable populations.^{xii} However, NVE is not limited to the Com, and includes a range of other harmful online subcultures and violent extremist networks.

764 represents a notable shift in the threat landscape. Unlike traditional extremist groups that are motivated by some political, religious, or ideological goals, individuals involved in 764 appear to be driven mainly by a fascination with violence and a deep hostility toward society. Their actions are often less about advancing a clear cause and more about gaining status and recognition within online communities that glorify harm and social breakdown.

In terms of its structure, influence within the 764 network tends to be highly status-oriented with access being tightly controlled. Prospective members are often required to demonstrate involvement in criminal activity before being admitted to higher level channels. More senior members oversee recruitment, of both members and victims, through various platforms with limited moderation and broad user access (e.g., Discord, TikTok, Roblox, Instagram).^{xiii} For members, leaders maintain internal rosters of who is responsible for what to moderate member activity. For victims, members begin by establishing often intimate connections to eventually coerce them into sending explicit images or videos. These materials are then used to enable exploitation of the victim for clout and status within the network.^{xiv} Though many groups may be disrupted by the removal of a key figurehead, 764 has remained resilient following the arrest of Cadenhead in 2021, splintering into subgroups and creating new downlines of members within the broader network.

METHODOLOGY

The following is based upon an open-source database constructed by NCITE. Cases were identified through systematic searches of news reporting, court filings, press releases, and public law enforcement statements. Once potential cases were identified, links to 764 or NVE more broadly were confirmed by reviewing official state and federal court records and charging dockets. Federal and, where applicable, state, court records were collected and reviewed for all cases that met our inclusion criteria. Charges, cases status, and sentencing outcomes were coded and are described below.

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDIES

New York (November, 2021)

A New York man was arrested following multiple anonymous tips to the FBI about a potentially violent individual who possessed firearms and posted sexually explicit images of children online. He has been charged with possession of a firearm and ammunition as a felon, sexual exploitation and attempted sexual exploitation of a minor, coercion and enticement and attempted coercion and enticement of a minor, and possession of child pornography. This was one of the first cases that shed light on the deeply disturbing emerging threat that 764 poses to United States and international security. The case is ongoing.

Florida (January, 2024)

A Florida man was arrested after the FBI conducted a search of his residence. The search found a collection of videos and pictures on a thumb drive that were organized into folders by category, with labels including “764”, “self harm”, “child-gore” and more. While denying involvement in 764 after his 18th birthday, he did admit he shared images and videos of 764 content including child sexual abuse material when he was a minor. He plead guilty to possessing child sexual abuse materials and was sentenced to serve 84 months in prison followed by a lifetime of supervised release while also registering as a sex offender and paying restitution to the victims.

Arizona (December, 2024)

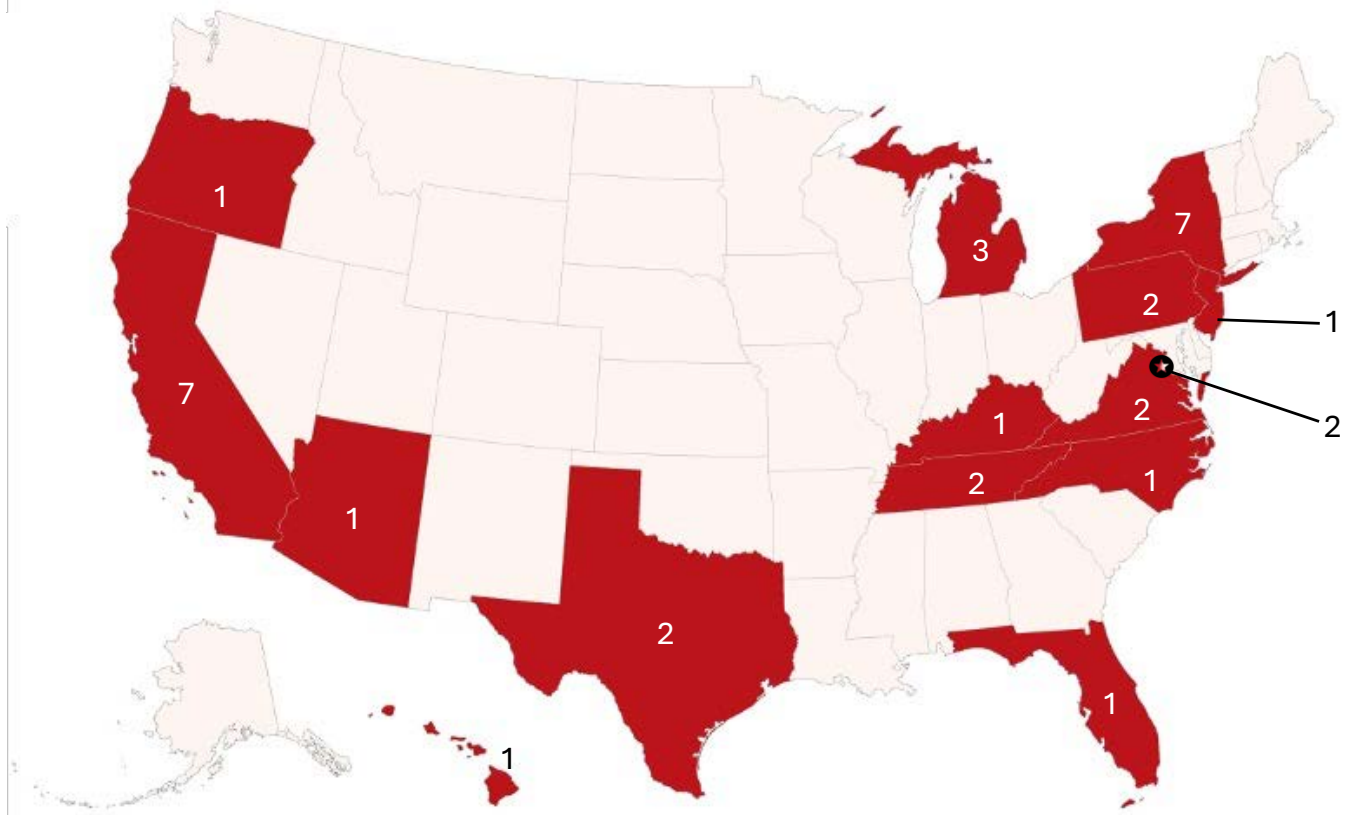
An Arizona man was arrested in connection with being a leader and member of the group since 2019. While originally charged with producing child sexual abuse material and cyberstalking, a superseding indictment was released in October 2025 that contains additional charges. He is charged with participating in a child exploitation enterprise, conspiring to provide material support to terrorists, conspiring to kill, kidnap, or maim persons in a foreign country, producing child pornography (five counts), distributing child pornography (11 counts), coercing and enticing minors to engage in sexual activity (three counts), cyberstalking (three counts), animal crushing and distribution of animal crush videos, and conspiracy to commit wire fraud. If found guilty he could face upwards of life in prison. The case is ongoing.

MAPPING CRIMINAL CASES IN THE U.S.

As of December 20, 2025, thirty-three individuals have been publicly charged in the United States for criminal activity associated with 764, CVLT, and Greggry's Cult. Charges are credited to the federal or state court where the charges were filed and prosecuted. California and New York have had the greatest number of cases. The cases in Figure 1 are predominantly federal cases, though two minors who received state charges (one in Texas and Oregon) are also included. The location for each case reflects where the defendant was charged (either the federal court or state court). This illustrates the landscape of charges in the U.S., highlighting a clustering of charges around the East and West coasts, and an absence of charges to date in the central U.S.

Figure 1

Federal and State Criminal charges associated with 764 and two precursor groups, CVLT and Greggry's Cult



Note. Count of criminal cases are depicted in the state where the case was prosecuted.

FEDERAL CASES

There have been 31 individuals publicly charged with federal crimes related to membership in 764 and precursor groups, CVLT and Greggys Cult. Of those, 22 cases were specifically linked to 764. Federally, the youngest member of 764 charged was 18 years old. 82% of 764 members who received federal charges were under the age of 25 years at the time of arrest. All individuals charged across 764, CVLT, and Greggys Cult were male.

The first federal indictment¹ of a 764 member was in 2021. Three additional 764 members were federally indicted in 2023. All remaining federal indictments related to 764 occurred in 2024 and 2025. Over half of all 764 federal indictments were in 2025 – a 350% increase compared to 2024. All federal indictments in the U.S. related to CVLT and Greggys Cult occurred between January 2025 and December 2025, though their primary activity occurred between 2019 and 2021.

Summary of the Charges

764, CVLT, and Greggys Cult members received 157 federal charges related to 20 criminal offenses. The most common criminal statute 764 defendants were charged with was the possession of or access with intent to view child pornography (18 U.S.C. §§ 2252(a)(4)(b) and (b)(2)) (70%), while the most common criminal statute CVLT and Greggys Cult defendants were charged with was participation in a child exploitation enterprise (18 U.S.C. §§ 2252A(g)) (100%).

A summary of the percentage and number of defendants who received one or more counts of a specific charge are provided in Table 1.

Examining the number of counts of a given offense can illuminate the magnitude of such offenses above and beyond the number of defendants charged with those offenses. Across the 157 counts applied to 764, CVLT, and Greggys Cult cases, the most frequent charges were for the exchange (distribution or receipt) of child pornography (18 U.S.C. §§ 2252(a)(2) and (b)(1)), followed by charges for the possession of or access with intent to view child pornography (18 U.S.C. §§ 2252(a)(4)(B) and (b)(2)). Across all charges, 59% (93) were for offenses related to child sexual abuse material. 19% (30) were related to the coercion, enticement, and sexual exploitation of a minor. 10% (16) of charges included a conspiracy enhancement, referring to offenses that involved more than one perpetrator.

A summary of the number of counts across the twenty offenses is provided in Table 2.

¹ An indictment is a formal charging document in which a grand jury alleges that an individual committed specific criminal offenses, initiating prosecution by the government.

Table 1

Summarizes the percentage of defendants who were federally charged with specific types of offenses.

Offense Description	764 Defendants	CVLT / GC Defendants	All Defendants
Possession of child pornography; Access with intent to view	70% (14)	44% (4)	62% (18)
Coercion and enticement of a minor; Attempted coercion of a minor	50% (10)	-	31% (9)
Sexual exploitation of a child for the purpose of producing a sexually explicit visual depiction	40% (8)	44% (4)	41% (12)
Production of child pornography, manufacture of child pornography	25% (5)	11% (1)	20% (6)
Distribution of child pornography, receipt of child pornography	30% (6)	56% (5)	38% (11)
Cyberstalking; cyberstalking of a child	20% (4)	11% (1)	17% (5)
Child exploitation enterprise	15% (3)	100% (9)	41% (12)
Distribution of animal crush videos	15% (3)	-	10% (3)
Animal crushing	10% (2)	-	7% (2)
Communicating interstate threats	10% (2)	-	7% (2)
Conspiracy to sexually exploit a child	10% (2)	-	7% (2)
Racketeering conspiracy	5% (1)	56% (5)	20% (6)
Conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists	5% (1)	-	3% (1)
Conspiracy to kill, kidnap, or maim persons in a foreign country	5% (1)	-	3% (1)
Use of interstate commerce facilities in the commission of murder-for-hire	5% (1)	-	3% (1)
Cyberstalking of a child resulting in permanent disfigurement or life-threatening injury	5% (1)	-	3% (1)
Conspiracy to commit wire fraud	5% (1)	-	3% (1)
Felon in possession of a firearm and ammunition	5% (1)	-	3% (1)
Racketeering conspiracy	5% (1)	-	3% (1)
Conspiracy to communicate interstate threats	-	44% (4)	14% (4)

Note. Charges include all federal indictments or superseding indictments filed as of December 20th, 2025. “GC” = Gregg’s Cult. Individuals charged by criminal complaint but not indicted as of December 2025 have been excluded from the table.

Table 2

Summarizes the total count of offenses across all federal cases.

Offense Description	764 Defendants	CVLT / GC Defendants	All Defendants
Distribution of child pornography, receipt of child pornography	24	11	35
Possession of child pornography; Access with intent to view	15	10	25
Sexual exploitation of a child for the purpose of producing a sexually explicit visual depiction	12	7	19
Production of child pornography, manufacture of child pornography	13	1	14
Child exploitation enterprise	3	9	12
Coercion and enticement of a minor; Attempted coercion of a minor	12	0	12
Conspiracy to sexually exploit a child	1	5	6
Cyberstalking; cyberstalking of a child	5	1	6
Distribution of animal crush videos	6	0	6
Communicating interstate threats	6	0	6
Conspiracy to communicate interstate threats	0	4	4
Animal crushing	3	0	3
Racketeering Conspiracy	2	0	2
Conspiracy to provide material support to terrorist	1	0	1
Conspiracy to kill, kidnap, or main persons in a foreign country	1	0	1
Use of interstate commerce facilities in the commission of murder-for-hire	1	0	1
Cyberstalking of a child resulting in permanent disfigurement or life-threatening injury	1	0	1
Conspiracy to commit wire fraud	1	0	1
Felon in possession of a firearm and ammunition	1	0	1
Conspiracy to murder in aid of racketeering	1	0	1

Note. Charges include all federal indictments or superseding indictments filed as of December 20th, 2025. “GC” = Gregg’s Cult. Individuals charged by criminal complaint but not indicted as of December 2025 have been excluded from the table.

As of December 20th, 2025, only four defendants federally charged have been sentenced – all of those were members of 764. The shortest sentence imposed 84 months (7 years) imprisonment followed by lifetime supervised release. The longest sentence imposed 360 months (30 years) imprisonment followed by 120 months (10 years) supervised release. Defendants are also required to register as a sex offender upon their release.

Implications of the Charges

Examining the federal charges applied to violent extremist groups in the U.S. often highlights the gap between group-specific patterns of coordinated criminal activity and appropriately prosecuting in the absence of terrorism charges. However, for 764 and related precursor groups, the federal charges demonstrate a concerted effort by law enforcement and prosecutors to establish precedence of the collective threat posed by these groups internationally. For instance, the first indictments related to 764 often applied charges specific to possessing, distributing, or manufacturing child sexual exploitation material. Federal cases in 2025 not only show a substantial increase in the number of indictments for 764 and related groups but also include more sophisticated charges reflective of the organized nature of these groups.

In 2025, 12 defendants were charged with administering a child exploitation enterprise under 18 U.S.C. §§ 2252A(g).^{xv} Though this represented only 8% of total charges across 764, CVLT, and Gregg's Cult, the application of this statute has implications for future efforts to disrupt 764. All defendants who received this charge were identified as leaders and administrators of 764, CVLT, and / or Gregg's Cult. Criteria to meet this charge include entering into an agreement with others to knowingly engage in criminal activity to exploit minor children. This is a higher level of involvement in child exploitation than other conspiracy charges – which refer to working with others to commit an offense – because it requires evidence that several defendants (three or more) knowingly administered a criminal organization, allowing prosecutors to introduce enterprise liability. The use of this charge also provides prosecutors with the potential to impose higher sentencing for offenders. Further, as was demonstrated in the indictment against the four CVLT leaders, this charge is sufficient to impose those sentences without requiring a number of additional, smaller charges, because child exploitation enterprises encompass offenses against individual victims. In the absence of statute, prosecutors will need to justify separate counts for multiple offenses and then seek cumulative sentencing for each count in order to achieve longer sentences.

On October 29, 2025, prosecutors issued a superseding indictment for a 764 defendant originally charged in January.^{xvi} Among the 26 additional charges added in the superseding indictment was a charge for administering a child exploitation enterprise due to the defendant's role as a leader and administrator of both CVLT and 764. Further, the defendant was charged with conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists (18 U.S.C. §§ 2339A).^{xvii} In this instance, the indictment alleges that the defendant conspired with others to commit an offense outside of the U.S. that meets the criteria for a federal crime of terrorism^{xviii} (18 U.S.C. §§ 956(a)).

STATE CHARGES

Assessing the threat landscape at the state level is more challenging. State-level charges involving 764 and its associated networks are more difficult to identify and analyze systematically due to significant variation across state judicial systems, including differences in charges, sentencing guidelines, and the scope and accessibility of publicly available records. There is no centralized database or platform that enables comprehensive, cross-state searches. To date, NCITE has identified only two individuals who have been charged at the state level in connection with 764, both minors at the time of arrest.

Cadenhead was arrested in August 2021 after a search warrant collected two laptops, cell phones, and a modem and law enforcement found evidence of possible child pornography. The 266th Judicial District Court of Erath County, Texas charged Cadenhead with nine counts of possession with intent to promote visual material that depicted a child younger than 18 years of age engaging in sexual conduct in September 2022. In March 2023, he waived a jury trial and pleaded guilty to all nine counts of the indictment without a plea agreement with the state of Texas. He was then sentenced with 20 years of confinement on each of the first eight counts and 10 years' probation on the ninth count. The sentences for the first three counts are stacked and the sentences are ordered to run concurrently for the fourth through eighth counts. The concurrent counts are to begin after Cadenhead was released from confinement on the third count. Finally, the probation sentence for the ninth count will begin after the concurrent sentences complete. Overall, Cadenhead was sentenced to 80 years in prison when he was 17 years old.

The second case involves a 14-year-old that was arrested in May 2025 for allegedly posting his plans in 764 chatrooms to commit a bombing and mass shooting at a local mall in Oregon. The defendant received charges for the following offenses: attempted second-degree murder, unlawful possession of firearms (two counts), disorderly conduct, unlawful use of a weapon (two counts), tampering with physical evidence. The case is still being adjudicated.

LOOKING FORWARD

Looking ahead, NCITE's research will expand beyond charges and prosecutions to examine the life course and developmental pathways of individuals charged with or convicted of NVE-associated crimes. One of NCITE's NVE workstreams is integrated into a larger youth mobilization portfolio² that provides an end-to-end plan to map recruitment and mobilization pathways of 764 members (as well as other NVE networks) to provide insights for policy and practice via bespoke guidance and training packages. The team is synthesizing the current evidence base, alongside front-line practitioner expertise, and applying advanced analyses to surface patterns of vulnerability, recruitment and mobilization. The project adopts a comparative lens across emerging threats related to NVE to capture the full range of risks facing communities. Expected outputs include validated indicators, youth-focused risk and resilience profiles, an evaluated training curriculum for end users, and a series of practically-oriented guidance for end users. The intended impact is improved prevention, assessment, and intervention decisions to keep minors and communities safe from NVE.

² National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (NCITE), University of Nebraska at Omaha. Youth Terrorist Mobilization. <https://www.unomaha.edu/ncite/research/research-projects/rottweiler-youth-terrorist-mobilization>

CONCLUSION

The pattern of charges applied to 764 and associated members reflects the component parts of their offending. However, in the absence of a terrorist designation, the charges may fail to capture the totality of the harm caused by 764 and related groups as a coordinated effort to attempt to destabilize society and incite violence.

Cases linked to 764 highlight the difficulty of charging individuals involved in a hybridized threat using legal frameworks designed for more conventional forms of crime or terrorism. In the absence of a U.S. terrorist designation, prosecutors have largely relied on charges related to child sexual exploitation, coercion and enticement, and other serious criminal offenses. While these charges appropriately reflect the severe harms inflicted on victims, they often fall short of fully capturing the networked and transnational nature of 764 and NVE activity more broadly. This evolving threat requires an equally adaptive response. NCITE's ongoing program of research aims to generate the evidence needed to inform and support that response.

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