



The Honorable Todd Blanche  
Acting Attorney General  
Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20530

April 7, 2026

Dear Acting Attorney General Blanche,

On behalf of the National District Attorneys Association (NDAA), I write to urgently request the Department of Justice's assistance in addressing a matter with profound implications for ongoing child exploitation investigations in the United States and globally.

NDAA is the oldest and largest national organization representing state and local prosecutors in the nation. NDAA is a non-partisan, non-profit membership association that provides training, technical assistance, and resources to prosecutors to aid in their pursuit of justice. With over seven-thousand members, NDAA's mission is to be the voice of America's prosecutors and to support their efforts to protect the rights of individuals and the safety of communities.

NDAA has been informed that Microsoft Corporation intends to decommission and permanently destroy legacy server infrastructure associated with Skype. This includes stored communications data as early as June 2026. While the company's prior decision to shut down Skype as a platform was a positive step, the planned destruction of backend server data presents an immediate and severe risk to active criminal investigations.

### **The Issue**

A substantial portion of global livestream child sexual exploitation investigations—particularly those conducted through Operation PHAROS—relies on communications conducted via Skype.

These cases involve:

- Thousands of active investigations across federal, state, and international jurisdictions.
- Known use of Skype by traffickers, though many offender accounts remain unidentified.
- Critical reliance on historical chat content, account identifiers, and metadata to identify both perpetrators and victims.

Because Skype has historically been treated as a communications platform, rather than an Electronic Service Provider that is subject to proactive reporting obligations, much of this data exists only in response to legal process and is not independently preserved elsewhere.

The planned destruction of Skype server data would result in the permanent loss of:

- Communications evidencing child sexual exploitation
- Account data identifying sex traffickers and buyers
- Leads necessary to identify and rescue currently unknown child victims

This is not a speculative concern—it is the imminent elimination of evidence tied to ongoing abuse of children.

## **Operational Context – Operation PHAROS**

Operation PHAROS, led by Homeland Security Investigations and supported by the Department of Justice’s Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, is a global law enforcement initiative focused on dismantling livestream child sexual abuse networks and rescuing victims.

Key operational realities include:

- Traffickers, often located in Southeast Asia and other regions livestream the sexual abuse of children to paying customers worldwide.
- Buyers direct abuse in real time and, in some cases, travel internationally to commit hands-on offenses.
- Investigations frequently require months or years of undercover engagement before coordinated international enforcement actions.

Operation PHAROS Impact To Date:

- 355 children rescued globally (average age: 9)
- 293 traffickers and predators arrested across 28 countries
- 1,087 cumulative years of imprisonment imposed

These results have been made possible, in significant part, through lawful access to Skype data. Since 2018, Microsoft’s cooperation in producing chat content in response to legal process has enabled investigators to identify networks, generate leads, and coordinate international enforcement actions.

Our current investigative dataset is heavily dependent on Skype-derived evidence. Each dataset produces cascading leads—identifying additional traffickers, victims, and buyers. The loss of this data will halt that chain.

## **Urgent Concern**

We understand that Microsoft plans to delete all Skype data from its servers in June 2026. Based on existing investigative intelligence, this data likely contains:

- Thousands of unidentified traffickers
- Thousands of unidentified child victims
- A significantly larger network of buyer-predators

Destruction of this data would irreversibly eliminate the ability to identify victims, prosecute offenders, and prevent ongoing abuse.

## **Request for DOJ Intervention**

We respectfully request the Department of Justice's immediate assistance in exploring all available legal and regulatory avenues to preserve this data, including but not limited to:

- Engagement with Microsoft to delay or halt destruction of Skype server data
- Evaluation of federal legal authorities, international treatise, or civil injunctions to compel preservation
- Consideration of emergency measures given the scale of harm and ongoing victimization

Time is of the essence. Once this data is destroyed, it cannot be recovered, and the investigative consequences will be immediate and permanent. NDAA stands ready to assist in coordinating with state and local prosecutors nationwide and to support any federal strategy to preserve this critical evidence.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to protecting children and upholding the rule of law. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim J Cruz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Timothy J. Cruz  
Plymouth County District Attorney  
President, NDAA