

FBI Issues Alert For 'Barbie Video Girl'

Terry Collins, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The FBI says it recently issued an alert about a popular Barbie doll with a hidden video camera that could be used to produce child pornography, but stressed that the toy has not been linked with any reported crimes.

FBI spokesman Steve Dupre said Tuesday the alert last month was meant only for law enforcement agencies to advise them not to overlook Mattel's "Barbie Video Girl" during any searches. The alert was sent out by the bureau's Sacramento office.

It was then accidentally sent to some members of the media, Dupre said.

In a written statement, the FBI said that "the alert's intent was to ensure law enforcement agencies were aware that the doll — like any other video-capable equipment — could contain evidence and to not disregard such an item during a search."

The FBI also said that there have been no incidents of the doll being used as anything other than as intended.

The doll, which sells for \$49.99, has an LCD screen on its back and shoots video from Barbie's perspective through a lens hidden in the doll's necklace. It can be connected by a USB cable to a TV or computer and records up to 30 minutes of footage.

In a written statement, Mattel said child safety is the company's priority.

"Mattel products are designed with children and their best interests in mind," the company said. "Many of Mattel's employees are parents themselves, and we understand the importance of child safety."

Gerrick Johnson, a toy industry analyst with BMO Capital Markets, said the doll is popular and both boys and girls like the camera.

Media attention "is starting to build, but I really hope it doesn't," Johnson said. "I think it is a very clever product, kids like making videos and uploading things to the computer."

Jim Silver, industry analyst and editor at Timetoplaymag.com, said the controversy has been overblown.

"It's a doll, for Pete's sake," Silver said.

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AP Retail Writer Mae Anderson contributed to this report.

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