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PRESS RELEASE

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Sheriff Cannon Attends Law Enforcement Summit Opposing Facebook Encryption

(Washington DC) Several days ago, amidst growing concerns, Charleston County Sheriff Al Cannon and other law enforcements leaders throughout the country attended a summit at the Department of Justice in Washington DC about Facebook's proposal to implement end-to-end encryption of its services to prioritize privacy for billions of users. Law enforcement counterparts from the U.K. and Australia also expressed their concerns about this plan. The encryption would potentially block court ordered law enforcement access for all investigations. Social media is a vital investigative tool for almost all crimes, including property thefts, child sexual exploitation, homicides and terrorism. Sheriff Cannon states that this move "will severely hinder the already difficult task that law enforcement has of apprehending terrorists and predators."

The Charleston County Sheriff's Office is an active participant of the SC Attorney General's ICAC (Internet Crimes Against Children) task-force. The deputy assigned to this task force works closely with the SC AG's Office, and other local partners, to combat child sexual exploitation and child pornography. In the last half of 2018, the Sheriff's Office investigated 60 ICAC cases and performed over 500 ICAC forensic computer examinations for suspected child pornography. Sheriff Cannon is concerned that, despite the growing concern and efforts of cybersecurity teams at all levels of public safety, the full encryption of social media accounts would dismantle great strides already made by partnerships such as ICAC. The Sheriff further said that this block would "be detrimental to our ability to protect our children and identify predators and even those that have been victimized in pornographic images."

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