



Concealed police cameras capture an alleged American buyer of child pornography talking to a 14-year-old Russian boy. The American, who police say trafficked in child pornography, was later indicted in the United States. Police say they traced the buyer through the operator of a Russian pornographic Website.

OPERATION LANDMARK: HISTORY'S LARGEST CHILD-PORN CRACKDOWN

Officers from 20 countries — from Asia to Europe — took part in "Operation Landmark," a 10-month investigation launched in March 2001 to target Internet users who access and trade in images of pedophilia. The countries involved were Britain, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Turkey and the United States.

The sting monitored activity in 33 Internet newsgroups used by pedophiles over a 16-day period. They found 105,000 illegal images had been posted, featuring thousands of different children, and there were nearly 10,000 "hits" by online pedophiles.

Russia's trade in child pornography

Lack of effective legislation means the country's child pornographers are enjoying a thriving business.

By IRINA SANDUL
The Russia Journal

A shady-looking guy in a baseball cap springs up among a cluster of curious provincial travelers at Moscow's Kursky railway station. "Want to buy some porn?" he asks, addressing the embarrassed but curious youngsters.

When asked if he has pornography of children for sale, he grins and nods. Then names his prices, which increase as the actors' ages decline: 200 rubles (\$6.70) for tapes of children between the ages of 14 and 16; 300 rubles for kids 12 to 14; and 500 rubles for kids from 12 to 8 years old.

"Russian children, Moscow-made porn," he adds unctuously, like the under-the-table black-caviar seller that would have been peddling surreptitious goods in his place 12 years ago.

"Some children will allow themselves to be filmed or photographed for a plate of soup," said Alexander Slutsky, who heads the Moscow Police division that deals with Internet crimes, in an interview this week.

Some 20-30 percent of Moscow's street children are involved in prostitution or child pornography, according to a study conducted in 2001 by the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) under the aegis of the WTO.

Russia's Deputy Minister of Labor Galina Karelova said in an interview that the number of children on the street in Moscow is at least 1 million, of which 182,000 are migrants from other parts of the former Soviet Union. These children, said Marina Kamandina of Moscow's Center for the Temporary Isolation of Minors (CTIM), are the child molesters' and pornographers' easiest targets.

Ironically, there is not yet a law on the books in Russia that defines pornography. A bill was drafted by the Duma in 1995, but it has sat on the desk of former President Boris Yeltsin and Russia's current head President Vladimir Putin awaiting a signature. Therefore, while pornography offenders are sometimes prosecuted, authorities have few effective measures, allowing a murky gray-market industry to flourish.

In 2001 alone, underground pornography studios in Moscow churned out 2 million videocassettes and DVDs a month of non-child pornography for a profit of

500 million rubles, said Vladimir Tsvetkov, head of the Moscow Police's Anti-Economic Crime Division, in an interview with Rossiyskaya Gazeta.

The industry makes 100 million rubles a month on the 500,000 child pornography videos and DVDs it presses, the newspaper said.

Dozens of these child pornography DVDs are shipped to North America and Europe, where they fetch anywhere from \$100 to \$400 each — again, depending on the age of the child and the novelty of the storyline, Slutsky said.

On the Internet, at least 100 child-porn sites emerge and disappear every day, Slutsky added. Oksana Esdinechenko of Interpol Moscow said this rapid turnover is the main difficulty in coordinating the efforts of her organization and the Moscow Police. When Interpol requests information about sites from Russian law-enforcement authorities, it frequently turns out that those sites are long gone.

But the reach of these sites is not hard to estimate. Slutsky said that one Russian child-porn site, which ran for five months before being shut down by authorities in January 2001, made nearly \$15,000 a month selling videotapes and photographs of children. Slutsky said the site operators had been using a URL, or Web address, based in Thailand.

According to Slutsky, 80 percent of the visitors to Russia's child porn sites reside in the United States, with 10-12 percent clicking in from Germany. In contrast, he said, Russians rarely visit these sites.

In Russia, only 10 percent of pornography cases targeted by the police ever end up in court, Rossiyskaya Gazeta reported.

Slutsky said his department opened five criminal cases last year for circulation of pornographic material on the Internet.

Three Moscow-based child-pornographers received a two-year suspended sentence, while two received an 18 month suspended sentence.

In March 2001, the Moscow Police, together with Interpol, cracked down on a Russian Internet child pornography ring called Blue Orchid, named after the Website that sold pornography tapes through the Internet. Slutsky said it involved Russian producers from Moscow and Voronezh who sold about 200 tapes to mostly American customers.



A Web page for a now-defunct Russian child-porn studio.

Legislation in Russia fails to define what constitutes child pornography.

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