

Police Arrest 348 in Global Child Porn Investigation

More than 300 people, including teachers, coaches and doctors, have been arrested worldwide on child pornography charges after a Canadian-led investigation.

Toronto police said on Thursday the arrest of 348 people, including 108 in Canada, 76 in the United States and 164 in other countries from Spain to Australia, came after a three-year investigation of a Toronto company that distributed child porn.

"Of concern to the investigators was the number of people (arrested) who have close contact with children. The arrests included 40 school teachers, nine doctors and nurses, 32 people who volunteered with children, six law enforcement personnel, nine pastors or priests, and three foster parents," Inspector Joanna Beaven-Desjardins, head of Toronto's Sex Crimes Unit, told a news conference.

The investigation by some 30 police forces from Australia, Spain, Ireland, Greece, South Africa, Hong Kong, Mexico, Norway and the United States, among others, led to the rescue of 386 children, most of whom were prepubescent, she said.

Police began looking into the operations of a Toronto company called and its owner, Brian Way, in October 2010, and the U.S. Postal Investigation Service helped comb through the company's database to track down both the producers and the consumers of the porn, Beaven-Desjardins said.

Way's lawyer, Nyron Dwyer, declined to comment.

The website has been shut down.

People making the images included a youth baseball coach in

Washington state who made more than 500 films and a school employee in Georgia who put a camera in a student washroom to videotape images of students' genitals, U.S. Postal Inspection Service inspector Gerald O'Farrell said.

More than 350,000 images and over 9,000 videos of child sexual abuse were found during the probe, and arrests are continuing, Beaven-Desjardins said.

"It is still ongoing, there will be further arrests and I imagine there will be more children that will be saved because of it," she said.

Reporting by Andrea Hopkins; Editing by Eric Beech

© 2013 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.