

MASSIVE CHILD PORNOGRAPHY SYNDICATE BUSTED

by Margaret Rose

A massive global child pornography syndicate with links to South Africa has been busted, uncovering thousands of paedophiles worldwide. The South African police were tipped off by a foreign policing agency through Interpol after dozens of computers were seized in raids. International police discovered the addresses of alleged paedophiles from around the world.

What detectives have described as 'sickening', children as young as five are believed to have been groomed to have sex with each other and adults. Some of the details of the alleged pornography are too graphic to publish, with many of the children suffering extreme forms of violence. Detectives are working together with their international counterparts to investigate whether any children from South Africa are involved in the ring's operations.

A high profile South African task team has been formed to conduct investigations and to track down perpetrators. The team is overseen by Lieutenant-General Vinesh Munoo. Officers raided dozens of homes in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape and Free State, seizing heaps of material and equipment. After Specialists scrutinised hundreds of DVDs, cell phones, computers, external hard drives, memory sticks, cameras and video cameras, six arrests were made and others are imminent.

Those arrested include the principal of a private primary school in Nelspruit, a teacher in Florida, a teacher in Carletonville, a dermatologist in Pretoria, an IT specialist and a lawyer in the North West. "The accused are faced with various charges, including possession and distribution of child pornography," said Police spokesman, Lieutenant-General Solomon Makgale. They are alleged to have ordered DVDs and downloaded images from a Canadian-based website.

Investigations were conducted by Canadian, Australian, European, UK, and US authorities into the online website operations and chat forums used by paedophiles worldwide. Now shutdown, the Boylover.net site operated from the Netherlands, promoting sexual relationships between adults and young boys and boasting as many as 7000 members worldwide. From there, members resorted to more private channels such as e-mail, to exchange and share explicit images and films of sexual child abuse. Although investigations are still underway, investigators are gaining insight into the operations of global websites and networks used by paedophiles.

A police source described the alleged syndicate's operation as being huge and far bigger than anyone imagined. "What they have found is just the tip of the iceberg and involves numerous people, including many in positions of trust and even married with children of their own." he said. The race is now on to catch these people and to try and find those they are thought to have harmed before it is too late.

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