

# International operation nabs 245 child porn suspects

January 3 2013

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US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director John Morton speaks as National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) CEO John Ryan (L) listens during a news conference January 3, 2013 at the ICE headquarters in Washington, DC. An international police operation into child pornography led to the arrest of 245 people and the rescues of 123 children, mostly in the US.

An international police operation into child pornography led to the arrest of 245 people and the rescues of 123 children, mostly in the US, the US immigration enforcement agency announced Thursday.

John Morton, director of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, said 23 of the suspects were arrested in six more countries, though declined to specify them.

"I can't, for very sensitive operational reasons, identify the countries involved," he said.

Thirteen of the children were rescued outside the United States during Operation Sunflower—a five-week operation from November 1 to December 7 aimed at identifying people who own, trade or produce child pornography.

Among the children, 45 were under 12 years old, including five less than three years old.

There were 70 girls and 53 boys, Morton noted, adding that 23 of the children have since reached the age of majority.

Operation Sunflower was named in honor of the one-year anniversary of an investigation that started when Danish police found internet postings by a sixteen-year-old boy about his plans to rape an 11-year-old girl.

Thanks to a photo posted online showing a highway sign with a sunflower, [investigators](#) were able to find the house of the boy in Kansas and rescue the girl.

ICE works in partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children which is now asking the public to help identify two adult suspects, shown molesting a young girl in a photograph taken 11 years ago.

In 2012, a record 1,655 people suspected of sexually abusing [children](#) were arrested by the immigration enforcement agency, and 292 victims

were identified and rescued.

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