

# US dismantles huge international child porn website

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US Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson speaks during a press conference at the headquarters of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement on March 18, 2014 in Washington, DC

The United States announced Tuesday it has dismantled a massive international online child pornography ring, one of the largest such operations ever uncovered.

Authorities said they arrested and charged 14 suspects in the secret,

members-only online network, which had more than 27,000 subscribers.

The website's juvenile victims, who numbered more than 250, reside in five foreign countries and 39 US states, officials said.

Authorities said the victims, were, for the most part, boys between the ages of 10 and 17.

Among the countries where victims were found are Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Belgium.

The organization is "one of the largest known online child exploitation operations in history," Department of Homeland Security chief Jeh Johnson told reporters.

Among the suspects taken into custody was Jonathan Johnson, 27, the administrator of the website, which operated out the southern US state of Louisiana.

If convicted, Johnson faces 20 years to life in prison, said Kenneth Allen Polite, US Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

"These indictments represent a strong coordinated strike... against child pornography and those who allegedly seek to harm our most vulnerable citizens, our young children," Polite said.

The illicit website operated on a hidden service board on the Tor network from about June 2012 until June 2013, when Johnson was arrested.

The Tor network is set up to conceal user's location, making it possible to maintain online anonymity.

Authorities said at the time it was dismantled, the illegal website contained more than 2,000 shared webcam-captured videos of mostly juvenile boys enticed by the website's operators to produce sexually explicit material.

The investigation, which officials said is continuing, was carried out by DHS and the cybercrime unit of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the US Postal Inspection Services.

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