

NATIONAL

Freed Debauchery Suspect Arrested Again

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A US citizen accused of sex crimes and released on bond last week was arrested again Saturday when police spotted him with a young boy entering a Phnom Penh guest house, police said Sunday.

Richard Arthur Schmidt, 61, returned to police custody two days after a Municipal Court judge freed him. He was first arrested Dec 22 after police searched his Phnom Penh apartment and confiscated photographs of nude boys.

Judge Tan Senarong ruled late Thursday that a debauchery charge against Schmidt would stand, but that there was insufficient evidence to keep the sus-

pect in jail. The court confiscated his passport as police continued their investigation.

Schmidt, from the US state of Maryland, is expected back in court this week.

"The question now is what the judge is going to say, whether he will revise his judgment or lose face and say there is no evidence" to detain Schmidt, said Darnaudet Thierry, president of Action Pour Les Enfants, an NGO that cooperated in both arrests.

Police kept watch on Schmidt on Saturday and saw him take a boy into a guest house near the Japanese Friendship Bridge, said Pol Phiethey, chief of Municipal Foreign Police. Both Schmidt and the boy were dressed when police raided the room, said

Thierry, and Schmidt told authorities that he intended to teach the boy English.

But "the floor was wet, the bed was wet and the towels were wet. The boy had taken a shower already," Thierry said.

Pol Phiethey said Sunday police were questioning Schmidt and the boy.

Police are working with the Ministry of Interior and the US to arrange Schmidt's extradition for trial in the US, Pol Phiethey said. An official from the US Customs Service has arrived in the capital and is monitoring the case.

Tan Senarong said Sunday he had not yet received a police report on Schmidt's arrest and could not say whether he would stay in police custody.