

NATIONAL

Embassy Asks Gov't to Deport US Citizen

BY LUKE REYNOLDS
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The US has appealed to the Cambodian government to deport a US citizen to stand trial there for alleged sex crimes, Prime Minister Hun Sen said Wednesday.

Hun Sen said he would cooperate with a US Embassy request to deport the suspected debaucher, but he did not identify the suspect. He was speaking at a pagoda inauguration ceremony in Kompong Cham province.

Two US citizens are in the custody of Cambodian police facing debauchery charges.

Richard Arthur Schmidt, 61, and Blake Alan Respini, 46, were arrested last month in separate investigations.

The US Embassy is working

with Cambodian authorities to deport suspected sex offenders but no agreement has been reached on Respini or Schmidt, embassy spokeswoman Heide Bronke said. She said investigations into those cases were ongoing.

The two countries have no formal extradition treaty, but the Cambodian government has, in several previous cases, deported US citizens to be tried in the US.

US citizens accused of sex crimes on foreign soil can be prosecuted in their home country under a recently signed US law.

Respini, a schoolteacher in California, was arrested in Battambang town Dec 29 after police raided his guest house room and found him in the company of two 14-year-old boys. He also faces a

rape charge.

Schmidt, from Maryland state, was arrested twice in the span of a week in December. He was first arrested Dec 22 after a police search uncovered a collection of pornographic photos in his Phnom Penh apartment. A Municipal Court judge decided not to jail Schmidt because of a lack of evidence.

Police rearrested Schmidt on Dec 27, alleging that he lured a 13-year-old boy into a guest house room with promises to teach him English and then raped him. He is charged with two counts of debauchery and has been detained at Prey Sar prison since his second arrest. *(Additional reporting by Phann Ana and Lor Chandara)*

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