

NATIONAL

Police May Accept Outside Help on Pedophile Case

BY SAING SOENTHRITH
AND ELIZABETH TOMEI
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Cambodian police are considering whether to accept help from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation and the German federal police to open locked files on computer hard disks confiscated last month from an alleged German pedophile, a police official said Tuesday.

Keo Thea, deputy municipal anti-trafficking police chief, said the US and Germany both want to open the disk drives, but that the Cambodian ministries of justice and interior are still deciding whether to give them access.

Karl Heinz Henning, 61, was arrested in Phnom Penh late last month for his alleged role in a child pornography ring. Police found massive amounts of child pornography on his computer, but officials have been unable to unlock other

files on disk drives that are password protected.

Keo Thea said an FBI representative based in Bangkok and a representative from the German federal police each visited Cambodia last week and told national police and the Interior Ministry that they would be able to open the files.

He said German police want to take the hard disks to Germany to unlock them.

Interior Ministry spokesman Khieu Sopheak said the ministry has not received a formal request from either country to open the files. He added that the evidence should not be allowed to leave Cambodia, but declined further comment.

US Embassy spokesman Jeff Daigle said an FBI representative who visited Cambodia offered to help Cambodian police access computer files after hearing that they had trouble opening them. He said

Cambodian officials declined the offer.

Theo Kidess, deputy head of mission at the German Embassy, said a liaison from the German federal police who visited Phnom Penh offered Cambodian police assistance with technical tasks such as accessing computer files. He said he could not discuss details of an ongoing criminal investigation, or comment on whether German police are attempting to take materials involved in the child pornography ring back to Germany.

Cambodian police found 1,650 additional files when Henning's computer was first confiscated in August, some of which showed Henning and fellow German Thomas Baron von Engelhardt, 41, who is also in detention, having sex with children. Justice Minister Ang Vong Vathana said he was too busy to speak to a reporter.