

NATIONAL

Five in Alleged Child Porn Ring Are Charged

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Phnom Penh Municipal Court on Thursday charged two German men with debauchery and three ethnic-Vietnamese Cambodians with human trafficking for their alleged roles in a child pornography ring, a court official said.

German police are expected to arrive in Phnom Penh next week to assist in the investigation, which may be broadened to include suspects in Germany, Cambodian police and German Embassy officials said.

Karl Heinz Henning, 61, was charged in absentia with debauchery and human trafficking, said deputy prosecutor Ngeth Sarath.

Both charges carry a maximum penalty of 20 years in jail.

"The Vietnamese suspects brought the victims to [Henning] and he paid money to the three," said Ngeth Sarath. "This is a trafficking offense."

Thomas Baron von Engelhardt, 42, was charged with debauchery because he had sex with the children but did not procure them, Ngeth Sarath said.

Evidence presented at the court Wednesday included high-tech video and computer equipment, lea-

ther whips, sex and bondage paraphernalia and children's cuddly toys, as well as sadomasochistic literature.

Two of the suspects, Nguyen Hong Voeng, 20, and his wife Cheng Thit Yu, 21, pleaded guilty to charges of human trafficking, Ngeth Sarath said. Cheng Thit Heu, 45, has confessed to providing her 10- and 11-year-old daughters for sex, but her plea remains unclear, he said.

"She said she received money from [Henning] after she dropped the child with [him]," he said.

Ngeth Sarath referred further questions to Court Director Chiv Keng, who said he was too busy to speak to a reporter.

"We are continuing to investigate the case," said Keo Thea, deputy chief of the municipal anti-human-trafficking office. "And we are cooperating with the German police. Next week they will arrive and we'll learn if others are involved."

Keo Thea said the investigation could involve suspects in Germany, but declined to elaborate.

Aside from Henning, all the suspects were in police custody Thursday and will likely be sent to prison today.

Keo Thea said he had visited

Henning at Calmette Hospital Thursday evening and found that his condition was improving.

Henning threw himself from the balcony of his first floor apartment after police raided his apartment Sunday. Police initially said that four children were found at Henning's apartment, but clarified Wednesday that only one young girl had been discovered during the raid.

Theo Kidess, deputy head of mission at the German Embassy, said that officials from the German federal police would participate in the investigation.

Students at Pannasastra University, where Engelhardt taught English until at least last year, said they were shocked at the accusations against their former teacher.

"I liked him so much," said a 21-year-old student who declined to be named. "He taught so clearly and he talked slowly."

But during a three-month course late last year, Engelhardt sometimes had difficulty keeping still and rarely sat down, she added.

"When he [taught], he always changed his chair and moved around," she said.

Officials at two of Pannasastra University's campuses said no one was available for comment.