

Kiev Doubts Porn Charges Against Ukrainian in U.S.

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KIEV — Ukrainian authorities on Tuesday cast doubt on child pornography charges brought by U.S. prosecutors against a Ukrainian national, saying local investigators have found no evidence that the suspect has committed a crime.

Maksym Shynkarenko, a 33-year-old from the eastern city of Kharkiv, was charged in New Jersey on Monday with founding and operating a Ukraine-based child pornography website that had customers around the world and has resulted in 560 convictions throughout the United States alone.

A 32-count indictment against Shynkarenko says he traded in tens of thousands of hardcore pornographic images and videos that depicted children ranging from infants to toddlers and teenagers being graphically sexually assaulted or abused, in most cases by adults.

Paul Fishman, the U.S. attorney for New Jersey, said that in some cases, the videos were submitted by customers — later prosecuted — who had filmed themselves actively molesting children.

Shynkarenko was extradited to the United States from Thailand over the weekend, where he had been in custody since his 2009 arrest while he was on vacation. The case is being brought in New Jersey because U.S. investigators first discovered Shynkarenko's website while investigating another individual in the state.

Fishman said Shynkarenko purportedly made hundreds of thousands of dollars "effectively selling tickets to view the exploitation of children" from 2003 until 2008 by operating a network of websites with names including "Illegal.CP," "The Sick Child Room," "Hottest Childporn Garden," and "Pedo Heaven."

But Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesman Oleksandr Dikusarov said Tuesday that local investigators had found no evidence of Shynkarenko committing a crime.

"Our law enforcement bodies have investigated this and did not find anything," Dikusarov said. "We will be defending the rights of our citizen."

Shynkarenko's mother, Tetyana Cherenok, 64, a retired engineer, said her son had been mistaken for another man with the same first and last name.

"My soul knows the truth," Cherenok, choking back tears, said in a telephone interview from Kharkiv. "I am 100 percent sure that my son has never had anything to do with this filth, with this shame."

Dikusarov, the foreign ministry spokesman, said Kiev would be closely monitoring Shynkarenko's case.

Agents with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations division first located the site "Illegal.CP" in October 2005 during an investigation of an individual from New Jersey. In addition to the convictions of the 560 American consumers from 47 states, people have been convicted in other countries, federal authorities said. Canada is the only other country prosecutors would name.

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