

## For the sake of children

### National Post

December 8, 2007

**NATIONAL POST**

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#### Canadian police help lead the fight against child abuse on the Internet

by Adrian Humphreys, National Post

The mournful photograph of a nine-year-old girl being sexually abused is unavoidably large, projected some two metres high at the front of a classroom before mercifully disappearing. None of the men in the audience flinch. The lecturer takes a quick sip of coffee before speaking. "Be prepared for a lot of disappointment," says Detective Constable Warren Bulmer, a member of the Toronto police's pioneering Child Exploitation Section. "Because you have to be extremely dedicated to look at these pictures day-in and day-out, knowing that there is probably nothing you can do to help."

His audience this week were 10 members of the Romanian national police force's fledgling Cybercrime Unit. Last August, five investigators and five prosecutors from Chile sat in the seats. Next spring, 10 investigators from Vietnam will arrive. The draw for police from such diverse spots around the globe to this small, anonymous, temporary classroom east of Toronto is a remarkable five-day program of training by some of Canada's leading experts hosted by a private Canadian foundation. This is off-the-grid training and assistance, operating entirely outside the traditional bureaucracies of governments and law-enforcement agencies. The travel and accommodation costs for visiting investigators are covered by an anonymous private donor; the training is organized by two well-connected and well-respected former Toronto police officers; the University of Ontario Institute of Technology donates space; Microsoft provides free software. Det.-Const. Bulmer was even lecturing on his day off. "The Internet has removed international borders so investigators also have to remove the borders that divide them," said Paul Gillespie, who recently retired as the head of the Toronto police's Child Exploitation Section. He now helps run the Kids' Internet Safety Alliance (KINSA), which runs the program. Mr. Gillespie is the cop who, drowning in online child abuse images and computer data collected on suspected abusers, famously sent a frustrated e-mail to Bill Gates, the billionaire founder of Microsoft Corp., the U.S. software giant. In his 2003 missive, he suggested the computer revolution helped create this child porn morass so the computer titan should help solve it. Mr. Gates agreed and his company worked closely with police to create the Child Exploitation Tracking System (CETS), a high-level intelligence database that allows officers to store, sort and share masses of information. It is that model of private partnership and

the blending of public resources across nations that has fuelled the KINSA training course, which includes intensive training on how to use the latest version of CETS, which Microsoft provides free to police agencies. "We are working to create a global network of investigators," Mr. Gillespie said. The Romanian investigators are anxious to get in the game. "They are different countries with different legal systems, but the suspects are the same and they are committing the same crimes," said Inspector Marcel Patatu of the Romanian national police's Cybercrime Unit. He and his colleagues come from the unit's headquarters in Bucharest and field offices around the country. They have a lot on their plate. Their unit probes Internet and credit card fraud, computer hacking and copyright infringement as well as child pornography. "We're very busy," said Insp. Patatu.

There are plans for more officers and more resources but right now, the officers admit, child pornography and online sexual abuse are not the unit's top priority. "We are at the beginning. We don't have so much money," said another officer, who said there had only been about 12 to 15 cases of people in Romania caught with child pornography collections. Gary Ellis was once Mr. Gillespie's boss, heading the Toronto police force's Sex Crimes Unit and Homicide squad before retiring. He co-organized the KINSA training and suggests the Romanian's caseload will dramatically increase once the officers seriously delve into it.

"In our early days I called it our hidden crime, our hidden shame," Mr. Ellis told the visiting officers. His unit saw the number of child porn cases grow from 300 in January, 2002, to more than 500 cases three months later. "Once we started making arrests and publicizing the problem and our efforts, we got even more reports from the public and we realized we had an even bigger problem. We end up making more work for ourselves." And painstaking work it is. Det.-Const. Bulmer walked the visiting officers through some of the cases his Toronto unit has worked on, outlining the intricate attention to detail and the pioneering CSI-like techniques of image analysis that have made the difference between children continuing to be abused and shared over the Internet and being rescued by police in countries around the world.

The Romanian investigators also heard from Sergeant Paul Krawczyk, the undercover Toronto police officer who this year infiltrated an international network of 700 pedophiles, child abusers and pornographers spanning 35 countries. When the arrests came, the case made headlines around the world. The visitors also heard from a former child prostitute; David Butt, a former Ontario prosecutor specializing in the child exploitation cases; Dr. Peter Collins, a forensic psychiatrist; two RCMP officers from the National Child Exploitation Co-ordination Centre, and others.

The ambitious program aims to have an immediate impact. "Each country has its own set of problems and its own solutions," Mr. Ellis said. A study by Chile's National Service for Minors estimates there are 4,000 children in the commercial-sex trade in the country, some as young as five. Other studies suggest that

number could be closer to 15,000. In Vietnam, the United Nations Children's Fund reports child prostitution and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes is on the rise. Vietnam's profile in child sex tourism came to prominence last year when Gary Glitter, the British glam rocker, was sentenced to three years in jail for molesting two girls, aged 10 and 11, at a resort. In Romania, there is concern for the street children -- at least 2,000 in Bucharest, the nation's capital, and 5,000 across the country -- and the effect of newly relaxed border controls that came this year with the country's entry into the European Union. A number of street children have been forced into the sex trade at a very young age, according to ECPAT, an organization working to eliminate child sexual exploitation. Romania is named as a source country for children sold for sexual purposes. There have been recent cases of street children being forced to engage in the production of pornographic materials, say the visiting Romanian officers. "Usually, the suspects are foreigners. They are Dutch or from the U.K. and come to Romania to commit a crime. There are some of these crimes committed by Romanians, but we are more involved in joint cases with other countries," Insp. Patatu said. Working closely with like-minded officers in other countries is an increasingly important part of the job, Det.-Const. Bulmer said. It can be as important as the technological wizardry. "Part of our success is knowing so many people in so many places," he said of the Toronto force, which has earned an international reputation for its work. Often his analysis of an image points to the child being abused in another country. "What's the point of me having that information if I don't share that information with someone who can do something about it?" he said. The Romanian officers quietly nodded.

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