

Ashton Kutcher's NGO Supplies Police with 'Free' CIA-linked Surveillance Tool to 'Protect Kids'

A suspect NGO claiming to combat child trafficking by providing surveillance tech to US police has allowed Amazon to continue supplying U.S. law enforcement with facial recognition software despite the tech giant's moratorium on its sale to police.



BY WHITNEY WEBB SEPTEMBER 8, 2020 19 MINUTE READ



 audioread on rokfin

As calls for dramatic reforms of U.S. police departments have swept the country in recent months, several of Silicon Valley's largest companies have tried to salvage their image by asserting that they will no longer sell their facial recognition software to police departments. Among these companies is Amazon, which decided to place a one-year pause on the sale of its software "Rekognition" to U.S. police departments in early June.

At the time the moratorium was announced, *The New York Times* noted that "the announcement was a striking change for Amazon..." due to the fact that, "more than other big technology companies, Amazon has resisted calls to slow its deployment." Amazon's efforts to ensure the widespread adoption of its facial recognition software gained notoriety after a study found that Rekognition falsely tied 28 members

of Congress, most of whom were politicians of color, to mugshots, causing critics to accuse Amazon's product of both racial bias and inaccuracy.

However, what *The Times* and other outlets failed to pick up on, then and now, is the fact that Amazon's Rekognition is still being supplied to U.S. police, despite its official moratorium. Indeed, U.S. law enforcement agencies are still being offered Amazon's facial recognition software by a NGO partnered with Amazon that was created by actor Ashton Kutcher, who frequently co-invests with Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos.

That NGO, called "Thorn," continues to supply the controversial software to law enforcement agencies around the country under the guise of helping police "combat child trafficking." Thorn's role in supplying such software to law enforcement despite moratoriums is also notable because its founder Ashton Kutcher has publicly and "tearfully" supported Black Lives Matter amid the recent protests that provoked Amazon's moratorium on sales of Rekognition to police in the first place. In addition, Kutcher is also a major investor, alongside Amazon's Jeff Bezos, in a company that supplies AI-powered software to law enforcement agencies, further undermining Kutcher's professed support for ending racial inequities in policing.

Yet, further investigation into Thorn casts even greater doubt on its professed altruistic objectives, given the organization's ties to CIA cut-outs, Wall Street banks and another "anti-child trafficking" organization that was launched by Hillary Clinton and Cherie Blair, the wife of former U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The CIA, Wall Street and Thorn's "Spotlight"

Thorn was founded in 2012 by actors Ashton Kutcher and Demi Moore with the original goal of "investing in the innovation phase of potential tech-led approaches to ending online child sexual abuse." Kutcher and Moore were allegedly inspired to create Thorn after watching a documentary on child sex trafficking in Cambodia. Eventually, Thorn's plan to create its own "tech-led approach" to combatting online child sex abuse was shelved, with them instead partnering with two tech companies — Amazon and Digital Reasoning, to produce "a product to aid in identifying child sex trafficking victims who were sold online." Thorn then "made the decision to develop the product itself and provide it free to law enforcement."

Thorn's partners, per its website, include many of the largest Silicon Valley tech companies, such as Amazon, Google, Twitter, Facebook, Salesforce, Microsoft, Intel, Dropbox and Adobe, as well as Goldman Sachs and Verizon. They are also partnered with the NGO Polaris, which operates the U.S. National Trafficking Hotline and whose current CEO is a former operative for USAID, a CIA cut-out. Polaris is also a member organization of the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI), an organization allegedly devised and initially financed by Jeffrey Epstein and also associated with Epstein's top co-conspirator Ghislaine Maxwell. Other NGO partners of Thorn include the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), the international branch of which was launched in 1999 by Hillary Clinton and

Cherie Blair; and the McCain Institute for International Leadership, named for the late, hawkish Senator John McCain and hosted at Arizona State University (ASU).

The majority of Thorn's work involves providing local and federal law enforcement agencies with a software suite called Spotlight. Spotlight, under the guise of combatting human trafficking, is a sweeping, AI-powered surveillance tool that, per the tech companies that helped create it, is currently used "by more than 2,187 law enforcement and intelligence agencies in North America." It is provided to U.S. law enforcement free of charge by the Thorn organization, allowing law enforcement easy access to controversial surveillance systems that they ultimately use for much, more more than combatting sex trafficking. The software, per Thorn, is also used by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

According to Amazon, Thorn's Spotlight employs "a serverless Amazon Web Services (AWS) architecture that includes Amazon Rekognition, a deep learning-based image and video analysis service, and Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud (Amazon EC2) C5 instances." Amazon's website also states that "Amazon Rekognition, which uses deep learning to accurately identify objects, people, activities, and events in images and videos stored in Amazon S3, is **at the heart of one of Spotlight's most crucial capabilities**. (emphasis added)"

According to Thorn's director of product management Kristin Thorse, Amazon's facial recognition software was chosen because "it didn't make sense to build our own facial-recognition service when AWS already offers a best-in-breed solution like Amazon Rekognition." Amazon has repeatedly cited Thorn's Spotlight as proof that the controversial Rekognition software does more good than harm as part of its years-long public relations battle over its use by U.S. law enforcement.

Spotlight was also built with components from another lesser-known tech company called Digital Reasoning. Digital Reasoning's founder and co-CEO – Tim Estes – told Forbes in 2017 that the company is "clearly the emerging leader in surveillance," adding that "our ambition is to become the best artificial intelligence company to understand human communication." Digital Reasoning's flagship product is AI-powered "conduct surveillance," which analyzes the communications of employees and other individuals to determine if their communications are in line with company codes of conducts and ethics, leading media outlets to refer to Digital Reasoning as a "Robocop" of sorts that constantly monitors employee communications and attentiveness. Currently, a majority of its clients are major Wall Street banks and the company is also partnered with other backers of Thorn, like Google.

Digital Reasoning's algorithm was built with an undisclosed amount of funding from the CIA's venture capital arm, In-Q-Tel. Spotlight's other co-creator, Amazon, has acquired several In-Q-Tel-funded start-ups and entities and is a long-time CIA contractor. Two major CIA-connected companies coming together to create "anti-child trafficking" software is concerning given that the CIA has a long and sordid history of sexually abusing children and trafficking children for the purposes of blackmail, including ties to the Jeffrey Epstein scandal as well as several other child sex trafficking rings.

In addition, Digital Reasoning's current President and co-CEO is a former Goldman Sachs banker and member of the controversial Carlyle Group. The Carlyle Group, which has deep ties to the Bush family, is the current owner of Landmark Aviation, which was also a key part of the CIA's extrajudicial rendition and torture program. Landmark also took over operations from CIA-linked Southern Air Transport at the controversial Ohio airport linked to Leslie Wexner and Jeffrey Epstein, with that airport allegedly being a factor behind Columbus, Ohio's status as one of the country's main child trafficking "hot spots". Ashton Kutcher notably got his start modeling for the clothing company Abercrombie and Fitch, which – until very recently – was owned by Leslie Wexner's The Limited.

Aside from In-Q-Tel, Digital Reasonings' lead investor is Barclays bank. Barclays' CEO, Jes Staley, has been investigated for his close and extensive ties to Jeffrey Epstein before and after his first arrest in relation to the sex trafficking of minors.

Spotlight is also supported by Google, another tech company funded into existence by the CIA via In-Q-Tel that is also a major contractor to the U.S. government and intelligence agencies, as well as the McCain Institute, named for late Senator John McCain. The McCain Institute's involvement is notable given that Sen. McCain's widower, Cindy McCain, who is a key part of the Institute's "Combatting Human Trafficking" initiative, publicly admitted "We all knew about him [Epstein]. We all knew what he was doing."

Despite having a well-funded initiative to "combat human trafficking" that preceded Epstein's second arrest by several years and admitting to knowing what Epstein was doing to under-age girls, the McCain Institute's initiative never made any effort to combat Epstein's sex trafficking activities. Instead, long-time Jeffrey Epstein associate and the person who connected Epstein to Alan Dershowitz and the Clinton family while Bill Clinton was president, Lynn Forester de Rothschild, is a key member of the McCain Institute.

Two other members of the McCain Institute are closely tied to Thorn, Ashton Kutcher – who co-founded Thorn and remains on its board of directors – and Ernie Allen – who is both the McCain Institute's and Thorn's "Human Trafficking expert." Allen is the long-time head of an "anti-human trafficking" organization launched by the Clinton and Blair families whose software tools "to protect children" are also furnished by Amazon, all of which is discussed in a subsequent section of this investigation.

For now, it is worth noting that Ashton Kutcher – Thorn's celebrity founder who has received the lionshare of credit in media reports for Thorn's reported successes in combatting child trafficking, is a top investor in a controversial law enforcement technology company and often co-invests alongside Amazon's top executive and world's richest man, Jeff Bezos. For instance, Kutcher is a major investor in the law enforcement software company Mark 43, which provides AI-powered dispatch system, records management software and data-intelligence platform to more than 70 U.S. police departments. Other investors alongside Kutcher in Mark43 include former CIA Director David Petraeus, Jeff Bezos, Ray Rothrock – a former partner in the Rockefeller family's venture capital firm, and Goldman Sachs. Aside from Mark43, Kutcher and Bezos have publicly co-invested together in several companies, including Airbnb and Fundbox.

Thorn's Boardroom

In light of Thorn's alleged mission to "protect children" by providing "free" software to law enforcement, the connections detailed above should be cause for concern. But, a closer look into the organization's board of directors takes us into more sinister territory, especially when we explore the history of Thorn's "child protection adviser" and board member, Ernie Allen. However, it is worth examining other members of the board, as well.

Board member Ray Chambers, who co-founded a private equity firm with Nixon's Treasury Secretary, William Simon, has more recently ventured into a youth-focused "philanthropic" effort with former

Secretary of State Colin Powell, with whom he co-founded America's Promise Alliance. Chambers, in recent years, has also become very involved in the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO), where Chambers serves as ambassador for global strategy, giving him a key role in WHO as it relates to the current coronavirus crisis.

Through his work at the UN, Chambers has forged a close association with the former head of Microsoft, Bill Gates. While servicing as the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Health in Agenda 2030 and for Malaria, Chambers launched the End Malaria Council with the Gates Foundation. Prior to the founding of the council, Chambers and Gates co-authored the paper *Aspiration to Action: What will it take to end malaria?* Gates, aside from the scrutiny he has attracted due to the coronavirus crisis, has ties to the Epstein scandal and Ghislaine Maxwell's Israeli intelligence-linked sister, Isabel.

Another board member of Thorn is Joe Lonsdale, one of the co-founders of the data-mining company Palantir. Palantir currently serves as a contractor to all 17 of the U.S.' intelligence agencies, as well as many other U.S. federal agencies including the Pentagon. It was largely funded into existence by the CIA's In-Q-Tel and the CIA was Palantir's only client from 2005 until 2008, during which time the CIA was a key part of directing Palantir's product development. Palantir is often considered a successor to the PROMIS software, whose theft and abuse by intelligence agencies in the U.S. and Israel was the result of a massive cover-up. Like PROMIS, Palantir can be used to track essentially anything and everything, including individuals, as well as predict the actions and movements of the individuals it tracks.

Notably, Lonsdale was accused by his former girlfriend Elise Clougherty of rape, with Clougherty alleging in court "that Lonsdale regularly degraded her, depriving her of food, physical abused her and raped her. He allegedly told her that women needed to be raped so that they could learn respect." Clougherty had worked for one of Lonsdale's post-Palantir start-ups and had previously modeled for Abercrombie Kids, a brand then-owned by Leslie Wexner.

Thorn's remaining board member is Suzanne Bell, who is a lawyer with the high-powered D.C.-based law firm Covington and Burling. Bell is one of Covington's main lawyers for the firm's clients in Silicon Valley and her work at the firm "focuses on emerging areas of technology, including artificial intelligence, big data, blockchain, fintech, digital health, autonomous vehicles, and the Internet of Things." Some of Covington and Burling's other, better-known partners include former National Security adviser John Bolton and former Attorney General Eric Holder. The law firm has been linked to several illegal acts, including the illegal overthrow of the government of Honduras in 2009, which also involved the U.S. State Department, then led by Hillary Clinton. Covington as well as Palantir are partnered with the NGO Polaris, itself a partner of Thorn and member of the Clinton Global Initiative.

The Dutroux Affair and the Creation of the ICMEC

Thorn's "child protection adviser" and one of its board members, as previously mentioned, is a man named Ernie Allen, who is also the McCain Institute's point-man for its "Combatting Human Trafficking" program. Allen was the longtime president of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), a NGO that is also partnered with Thorn. Allen is credited with bringing "technology and

innovation to the Center,” largely through a partnership with Microsoft, and growing the center’s financial assets from \$3 million in 1989, when he became its President, to \$38 million by 2010.

The NCMEC “serves as an information clearinghouse and national resource center on issues related to victims, missing and exploited children and operates a national toll-free hotline” and is partnered with and largely funded by the U.S. government. It has considerable sway over national legislation related to human trafficking, particularly child trafficking, and – through the hotlines and databases it operates – is capable of influencing which children appear on AMBER (America’s Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) Alerts and missing children bulletins published by the NCMEC and its affiliates.

In 1996, NCMEC expanded internationally at the behest of then-President of Belgium Jean-Luc Dehaene as a direct result of the “Dutroux Affair,” which spawned in the creation of NCMEC’s sister organization, the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) in 1999.

The ICMEC website describes the connection between its creation and the “Dutroux Affair” as follows:

“In 1996, Belgium was shaken by the tragic “Dutroux Affair.” Over the course of many years, Marc Dutroux, an unemployed electrician and father of three, committed a series of kidnappings, rapes, and killings of an unknown number of teenage girls. As the atrocity of the crimes was disclosed, the public became very critical of the way the authorities handled the case.

More than 300,000 Belgian citizens expressed their anger in the now-legendary “White March,” and shortly thereafter, Belgian Prime Minister Dehaene visited the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). He asked the then NCMEC’s President, Ernie Allen, if he would establish a Center in Brussels at which point Ernie answered, “You do not need an American solution to this problem – you need a Belgian solution. But we will help.” And NCMEC worked with the Belgian government, private sector leaders, victim parents, and law enforcement to create the Brussels-based Child Focus.”

Of course, the reason the Belgian “public became very critical fo the way the [Belgian] authorities handled” the Dutroux case was because due to the considerable evidence that Dutroux was part of a pedophile ring closely tied to Belgium’s political and economic elite as well as the suspicious deaths of numerous witnesses in the case against Marc Dutroux.

Dutroux says he procured girls for Belgian network

Andrew Osborn in Brussels

Marc Dutroux, the Belgian electrician accused of kidnapping, raping and murdering four young girls in the mid-1990s, has claimed that he did not act alone but was part of a wider paedophile network.

The horror of his alleged crimes brought 350,000 people on to the streets of Brussels in 1996 to condemn the police and the justice system, which were widely perceived to have bungled the investigation.

And now in an unauthorised interview with a TV journalist who masqueraded as a politician's chauffeur to gain access to Dutroux's prison cell, Belgium's most hated man has al-

exist," Dutroux told VTM, a Flemish TV station. "I maintained regular contacts with the people who made up this network. But the authorities don't want to look into it."

According to sources at VTM, which broadcast the programme last night, Dutroux claims that two of his victims — Melissa Russo and Julie Lejeune, both eight, who starved to death in special cages in his basement while he did a short stint in prison for theft — were not abducted for his own sexual gratification but for the network.

But Dutroux, who has been in jail since 1996 awaiting trial, repeatedly refused to name names in the interview but did



'A network with all kinds of criminal activities really does exist'
Marc Dutroux

mense pressure to reopen the entire investigation.

"He has always been manipulating the investigation," said Eric Goens, the editor in charge of the programme Telefacts. "And I think we should recognise that it could be a trick to force an investigation and get the trial postponed."

Gino Russo, father of Melissa, has reacted with horror to Dutroux's comments. "It's indecent," he said. "He says that he kept Julie and Melissa, so that's rape, kidnapping and sadism for starters. He talks about a network when we are already at the end of the investigation."

"It is now up to the judge to draw up the [trial] plan with what he has. If he says there is

As Elizabeth Vos noted in a [comprehensive article](#) on the Dutroux Affair for *Consortium News*, "a large amount of DNA evidence recovered from these cells [where Dutroux kept his victims chained] were never analyzed by authorities, even though it may have revealed the identities of additional perpetrators. The defense regularly cited DNA evidence indicating that other people visited Dutroux's cell, alluding to **hundreds** of human hairs that were never accounted for. (emphasis added)"

Vos then notes that Dutroux and his lawyers stated that he had abducted and kidnapped girls for the abuse of powerful individuals, all with the help of Belgian police:

"Dutroux and his counsel consistently alleged that he had abducted and abused girls with police help as part of a child trafficking and abuse network connected to the elite of the Belgian establishment during his criminal proceedings. The claims were discussed by The Washington Post, which also noted that police had said Dutroux was part of a child-prostitution ring that may also have been responsible for several other disappearances still unsolved. Reporters wrote that Dutroux's "gang" allegedly offered to buy young victims for \$5,000 apiece."

It is certainly concerning that the mass cover-up of a pedophile ring tied to the Belgian establishment is what spurred one of the architects of that cover-up, Belgium PM Dehaene, to seek out Ernie Allen at the same time as the cover up. Allen's success in aiding Dehaene with the Belgian government's response to the Dutroux Affair led other governments to request his help in similar matters, resulting in the ICMEC's creation, according to the organization's website. More troubling still is the fact the ICMEC was subsequently launched by none other than Hillary Clinton, who has considerable ties to child sex traffickers Ghislaine Maxwell, Jeffrey Epstein and Laura Silsby, alongside Tony Blair's wife Cherie Blair in 1999 at the U.K.'s embassy in Washington D.C.

Notably, the NCMEC has had years-long ties to the Clintons. For instance, Hillary Clinton's Director of Grassroots Engagement for her 2016 campaign and the co-founder of Hillary for America, Adam Parkhomenko, had worked for the NCMEC immediately prior to joining the Clinton campaign and, before joining the MCMEC, had worked for the Clintons beginning in 2003.

Taking Down Backpage

In addition to the disconcerting tie-in to the cover-up of the Dutroux Affair, NCMEC was itself linked to a child trafficking scandal in the United States back in 2012, a scandal which also involved Goldman Sachs – a partner of Thorn – and Arizona State University – where another Thorn partner, the McCain Institute, is housed.

In 2012, *The New York Times* revealed that a website called “Backpage” was “the biggest forum for sex trafficking of under-age girls in the United States.” The exposé revealed that Backpage’s opaque parent company, Village Voice Media, was owned by Goldman Sachs and other private equity giants of Wall Street. One of Goldman’s then managing director, Scott L. Lebovitz, was on the Village Voice Media board for many years, but he and Goldman claimed to have “no control” over Backpage’s operations.

At the time, “Backpage play[ed] a major role in the trafficking of minors or women who are coerced,” per *The New York Times*, and “in one recent case in New York City, prosecutors say that a 15-year-old girl was drugged, tied up, raped and sold to johns through Backpage and other sites.” At the time, Backpage had between 70%-80% of the market for prostitution ads.

The article in *The New York Times* helped spawn a major investigation into Backpage, eventually resulting in the 2016 arrest of its then-CEO, Carl Ferrer, and the site’s founders, Michael Lacey and Jim Larkin, following a three-year investigation into the website by California authorities, who referred to the site as an “online brothel.” Subsequently, Backpage’s defense attorney revealed that “one of the biggest allies [of Backpage] is the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children” and told *CNN* that BackPage and the NCMEC “work together.”

Following the arrests of Ferrer, Lacey and Larkin in 2016, Ernie Allen emphatically denied those claims, though leaked memos made public last year show that Allen “believed that Backpage was genuinely trying to rid its site of juvenile sex trafficking” during the period of time that NCMEC was known to have been meeting with Backpage.

In addition, a *Washington Post* article published a year before Allen’s denial noted that “Backpage.com says it reports to NCMEC at least 300 ads a month that it believes involves minors. NCMEC officials confirm that number — and say some months it receives as many as 800 referrals from Backpage.com” However, the article also noted that NCMEC referred to Backpage’s attempts to reduce ads tied to juvenile sex trafficking as “inadequate.”

At the time of NCMEC’s cooperation with Backpage, the organization admitted that “up to 71 percent of suspected child trafficking reports involved Backpage,” with Allen having stated in official testimony that “2,695 cases of suspected trafficking were reported by Backpage to officials in 2011 alone,” per *TIME* magazine.

Notably, Cindy McCain was part of an Arizona-based taskforce that also met with BackPage during this time, per her own admission. Also notable is the fact that Arizona State University (ASU), where the McCain Institute is housed, were also involved with “research” involving Backpage, where ASU researchers “placed faked ads on the erotic ad section of Backpage.com in 15 U.S. cities, and tracked how many different men called the phone numbers. This has yielded an estimate that one in 20 men in the

United States seek to pay for sex.” The study was funded by none other than the Ashton Kutcher-founded group, Thorn.

Though the arrests and investigation involving Backpage were essentially memory holed after 2016, reports published by *Reason*, *Wired* and *TechDirt* have since suggested an unexpected motive for the crackdown on the site – that Backpage, after it first came under scrutiny, became *too effective* at helping authorities track sex traffickers, perhaps revealing the reason why none of the federal charges filed against Backpage ultimately involved sex trafficking.

The aforementioned leaked memos, published just last year, revealed that prosecutors privately felt that “Backpage genuinely wanted to get child prostitution off its site” and also showed that Backpage actually went quite far in its efforts to aid law enforcement in efforts to remove sex trafficking-linked ads and that the site itself was actually an extremely effective tool for allowing law enforcement to track down sex traffickers. Indeed, *TechDirt* noted that, since Backpage was shut down, it has “only served to make it more difficult for law enforcement to track down traffickers, because they’re now much harder to find. At the same time, the evidence shows that shutting down these sites has also resulted in an increase in murdered women.”

What’s also notable about the case against Backpage is that the Department of Justice (DOJ) has pursued it as a civil forfeiture case, whereby the government “would seize a website operator’s assets and property,” transferring all of the information and web assets connected to this alleged “online brothel” into the hands of the federal government. Of course, the U.S. federal government has been caught on more than one occasion covering up sex trafficking or participating in it directly.

Given these newer revelations, allowing the use of a site like Backpage as such a tool to combat online child sex trafficking would certainly prove an obstacle to law enforcement instead utilizing a tool like Thorn’s Spotlight, which was launched the same year the Backpage arrests were made (2016). It is thus noteworthy that individuals tied to Thorn, such as Ernie Allen and Cindy McCain (and even Thorn itself by funding an ASU study regarding Backpage), played prominent roles in the case against Backpage.

Under Allen’s leadership, the NCMEC forged partnerships with Microsoft for “hi-tech solutions” to fight child trafficking online, as well as with Amazon and Google. This is especially important given the recent accusations levied against Amazon by advocacy groups, who claim the tech giant refuses to report child sexual abuse material on its platform and its cloud, with no comments regarding these claims from Thorn or the NCMEC. Similarly, Microsoft has been recently criticized due to the ease of obtaining child pornography from its Bing search engine, an issue it has declined to fix for years. Again, no statement from Thorn or the NCMEC has been made on this matter.

Watching the Watchers

Lawyer Nila Bala, writing about the use of facial recognition on children in school settings, recently noted that “surveillance is not just about being watched, but about who is watching.” While it is certainly possible, and likely, that some law enforcement uses of Thorn’s Spotlight have resulted in the rescue of trafficked children, the organization’s ties to intelligence, Silicon Valley behemoths and dubious “child protection” advocates and organizations are too extensive to ignore.

As the Jeffrey Epstein scandal uncovered and the Dutroux Affair, before it, members of the elite have gotten away with abusing and trafficking children for years, often with direct assistance from the very governments and institutions tasked with protecting those children. Thorn's Spotlight, developed by CIA-linked and CIA-funded tech companies with questionable track records when it comes to child pornography, seems to serve purposes beyond helping police rescue trafficked children. With the CIA's own ties to sex trafficking operations and its decades-long lack of accountability for those crimes, it's safe to assume that Thorn's Spotlight fails to shine a light on the children abused by intelligence-linked sexual trafficking operations.

In addition, Thorn appears to be only one of several organizations pushing using facial recognition software on images of children. For instance, researchers associated with Carnegie Mellon University, cited in [an article](#) on "child recognition technologies" promoting Thorn's Spotlight, are similarly promoting the mass-scanning of children's irises as a means of "protecting" them from child trafficking.

That report, published in *Towards Data Science*, states the following about this initiative:

"The idea is to install iris scanners in airport and border checkpoints. But, first, the technology needs data to compare scans to. So, before scanners can be used by law enforcement, parents would have to scan their young children's irises. Then, if they are abducted, the scanner matches their iris to their original images."

This is remarkably similar to the current efforts by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a suspect NGO with [a history](#) of sexually abusing the refugees they claim to protect that is also backed by some of Thorn's partners. The IRC is [currently piloting](#) a digital identity system involving iris scans for refugee children as part of the ID2020 initiative backed by Bill Gates, among others, that is set to be tied to an individual's finances, vaccination records and much more. The program's backers have openly stated that they soon hope to apply the program on an international scale.

Regardless of what ulterior motives may lie beneath the surface, Thorn's Spotlight is being used to supply controversial surveillance software to U.S. law enforcement without oversight, all because of the organization's professed mission to combat child trafficking. Yet, there is no follow up regarding how police use this technology after it is provided to them by Thorn, making it difficult to regulate the type of technology being used as well as who has access to the data it collects.

Indeed, it is very possible, if not likely, that Spotlight gives access to the data it collects to Amazon/Digital Reasoning and their partners at the CIA, especially since those organizations are particularly interested in amassing as much data as possible to improve AI algorithms, including those used in facial recognition software. It certainly would be a fair trade from Amazon's perspective, since Spotlight is provided to law enforcement for free where as Rekognition is not.

While its celebrity founder has allowed Thorn, thus far, to evade scrutiny, its ties to CIA-funded entities, Silicon Valley billionaires and dubious "child advocates" demand that the "spotlight" be shined on the use of its "free" software by law enforcement and its other affiliates.



Author

Whitney Webb

Whitney Webb has been a professional writer, researcher and journalist since 2016. She has written for several websites and, from 2017 to 2020, was a staff writer and senior investigative reporter for Mint Press News. She currently writes for The Last American Vagabond.

17 comments



Liane Franck says:

September 8, 2020 at 1:22 am

Hollywood is appearing creepier by the day. Even those not engaged in this web of child abuse had to know about it. They are just as complicit.

Reply



Rich says:

September 8, 2020 at 4:25 am

Absolutely. A very sordid business.

Reply



Sam says:

September 8, 2020 at 3:13 am

Mind-blowing as always, Whitney. One correction I thought worth pointing out: her name is Elise Clougherty. Thank you so much for your work, it has unraveled a labyrinth of evil that needs to see the light of day.

Reply



Jessica Krelle says:

September 8, 2020 at 3:49 am

I am saddened by this but not at all surprised. I'm pretty sure I remember Virginia Roberts Giuffre say she was going to talk with him about her organization 🧐🦋. Excellent job as always!!

Reply



Ben McCall says:
September 8, 2020 at 6:34 am

Another great report, thanks Whitney.

The NSA et al knows all we do anyway and the only people who can remain ‘private’ are the elite, it is laughable all this pretence of effort and hard work going into ‘good causes’ and the very problem the are working on does not reduce but grows hideously. Citizen collective action to respond and combat this needs, the following principles:

They know what is happening everywhere.

They have the knowledge and resources to stop bad things happening, but choose not to.

The reason they don’t stop it is they are either involved or benefiting in some way.

Everyone who is not questioning, or is defending, the status quo, is consenting to appalling things like child rape – on a massive scale.

People who say they are against the elite, but obviously are elite (eg. Trump) are dangerous distractions.

Replacing the whole shitshow with deep democracy, that puts the needs of children as top priority – economically, socially and culturally – is needed.

To do that will need to recognise the extremely rich, powerful forces against us, that must be defeated – and they will use every horrible act and tactic to stop us.

Therefore a high degree of unity of purpose and self/collective discipline is necessary, preventing them diving and ruling us.

Reply



J Laffrey says:
September 11, 2020 at 11:06 pm

Your article, Whitney, is full of jews. Why not identify them?

When we identify everybody by race, we really see what’s going on and by whom. That’s why the jewsmedia policy is to not identify people in articles or videos by race — unless it promotes their pro-jew anti-White agenda. I know. Years ago, in my ignorance of all of this, I worked for a daily newspaper — the Nashville Banner — and had to follow that general no-race policy. More recently, it has become quite clear to me why that was so.

Reply



Howard Tith says:
September 16, 2020 at 11:32 pm

Noticed it too, I would not identify them as Jews in the context of Jews but what kind of Jews they are. kutchner is a cabbalist as are most of the other Jews named in this article. Most of them are also Zionists.

Reply



Gerry says:
September 12, 2020 at 2:54 pm

Why is there NOT ONE journalist, and NOT ONE Hollywood elite – who will expose the truth af what is going on??? If only for selfish reasons, that ONE JOURNALIST or that ONE HOLLYWOOD ELITE would not only make themselves famous for the rest of all time, but would change the course of American history. Why will NO ONE step forward? Why must “the press” spout the left’s party line, even to their own detriment? When they could enrich themselves and go down in history – CHANGE HISTORY – for all time? WHY?

Reply



Robert Hass III says:
September 18, 2020 at 9:36 am

Who is Corey Feldman

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corey_Feldman?wprov=sfti1

Reply



Jeff Carmack says:
September 18, 2020 at 12:48 pm

Meaning itself is a network.

Reply



Yuri says:
September 12, 2020 at 5:21 pm

DAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAANM! once more a stunning epic tour de force in muckraking by Whitney Webb. I suppose I shouldn't be surprised anymore by this Web of evil and deceit and the strange bedfellows these rival oligarchs and great power produce but still is mind blowing. I'm shocked most by the Belgian connection as I'm based in Belgium and the Dutrox scandal, his piece of shit and sorry to say this but his piece of shit cunt of a wife and accomplice was granted parole and housed by a some Catholic Church Nuns organization this led to outrage and you wonder why would the authorities do this, you wonder how could the authorities have been soo grossly incompetent but after reading Elizabeth Vos's article for Consortium News which I think she relied on Wikileaks revelations its like the shock and horror of the Epstein and Sandusky scandal if you dig deeper and deeper and its just soo disturbing but we need people power movements to leap into action, and a real "squeal on your pig" movement.

Reply



Cold Anger says:
September 13, 2020 at 11:02 am

Thank you to the writer and everyone who helped in the research. It has just the right tone. I've learned to assume that any NGO connected to powerful people in business and government is involved in propping up the blackmail-based structure of the current Rotten World Order. To research the history and connections of those in control of any NGO or government entity is to reveal the horrid stench of sickening evil, usually covered by the public pretense of fighting against exactly what they are facilitating.. "Those you trust the most..."

Reply

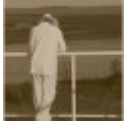


DISCLOSURE says:
September 13, 2020 at 12:15 pm

I suggest you look into Christopher and Catherine Meyer and PACT/Action Against Abduction and its links to NCMEC/ICMEC. They are friends with Hillary Clinton as Christopher was the UK Ambassador to the US at the time of the Madeleine McCann case. Also they were all friends with Clement Freud, known BBC

establishment pedophile on the scale of Jimmy Savile, and his son Matthew who ran the media campaign for the McCanns. The Freud family also owns Netflix which put out Cuties. Big Freudian link to all of this.

Reply



Guy says:

September 18, 2020 at 5:14 pm

What can I say other than another well researched article by Whitney .It is not a fun read but a needed read in order to be aware of the problem at hand .A problem that needs immediate attention because of the world's decent into a state of degradation .

Stay safe Whitney , without you ,we would all be mostly ignorant .

Reply



George says:

September 20, 2020 at 1:49 pm

“Thorn’s partners”... I don’t think any of them aren’t making bank in the Sex Trafficking industry.

In FACT: I’d bet “ Thorn’s partners” are All at the Top Level in Sex Trafficking.

Reply



edward donegan says:

September 20, 2020 at 5:20 pm

Excellent work.

Is it too late? Can we come together as citizens of the world and kill the evil? America was simply the expansion of evil. The true Evil Empire.

Reply



Ultra Violette says:

December 12, 2020 at 10:34 pm

This is all so crazy and reading more and more about it it’s literally always the same fucking people and companies. So sinister the very organisations that are supposed to protect the children.

Still Mind-blowing, but not surprising any more.

Thank you for your work Whitney!

Reply