Texas Authorities Arrest 7 Former MySpace Members

By REUTERS
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NEW YORK (Reuters) - Texas police arrested seven convicted sex offenders after MySpace handed over identity details about the former members of the Internet social network, the Texas attorney general's office said on Thursday.

The seven, whose profiles on MySpace had already been removed under an internal program to weed out sex offenders prowling the News Corp.-owned <NWSa.N> site, were arrested for breaking parole or probation rules.

The arrests, which occurred over a two-week period, come after authorities in several states asked MySpace to hand over information on convicted sex offenders.

The seven offenders had been convicted of sexually assaulting girls as young as 4 years old. Most victims were between 13 and 21 years old.

Six of the men were arrested because they had MySpace profiles even though their parole conditions banned them from using the Internet. One was arrested because he had failed to register as a sex offender with local authorities.

MySpace began working with authorities in May after tense negotiations over the legality of divulging its users' information.

"Texans will not tolerate criminals who prey on our children," Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott said in a statement. "These convicted sex predators established online identities on a Web site that is popular with teenagers and children."

Most states require convicted sex offenders to register their contact information with local authorities after being released from prison. Lawmakers are now pushing for the registration of valid e-mail addresses as part of the requirement.

MySpace commissioned background verification firm Sentinel Safe Tech Holdings Corp. to create a national database of sex offenders last year, after reports that some of its teenage users were abducted by sex predators.

"We partnered with Sentinel Tech to build this technology to remove registered sex offenders from our site and to ensure that law enforcement could arrest those who were violating their probation or parole," MySpace Chief Security Officer Hemanshu Nigam.
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violating their probation or parole,” MySpace Chief Security Officer Hemanshu Nigam said in a statement.

Before the national database was created, information on convicted sex offenders was available only locally.

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