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MIAMI MAN CONVICTED OF SEX TOURISM, CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGES

WASHINGTON – Miami resident Kent Frank was convicted of eight counts of sex tourism and child pornography charges following a five-week trial in federal court, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney R. Alexander Acosta of the Southern District of Florida announced today.

After less than two days of deliberations following the trial before Judge Adalberto Jordan, the federal jury in Miami found Frank guilty of eight counts charged in a 10-count indictment. Specifically, the jury convicted Frank of four counts of traveling in foreign commerce and engaging in illicit sexual conduct with a minor; three counts of purchasing or otherwise obtaining custody or control of a minor with the intent to promote the production of child pornography; and one count of traveling in foreign commerce for the purpose of engaging in illicit sexual conduct with a minor. The charge of traveling in foreign commerce and engaging in illicit sexual conduct with a minor is a new provision of law contained in the PROTECT Act, which became effective on April 30, 2003.

The jury did not return verdicts on two counts involving one of the females referenced in the indictment – one count of traveling in foreign commerce and engaging in illicit sexual conduct with a minor, and one child pornography charge.

The jury found that Frank engaged in commercial sex acts with three minors during two separate trips to Cambodia between September 2003 and January 2004. Evidence also showed that the defendant paid three minors in Cambodia money so that he could take pictures of them posing naked and in sexually explicit positions. The jury heard evidence that Frank took sexually explicit images of several minors in addition to the four females referenced in the indictment.

“This case underscores the Department of Justice’s strong commitment to prosecuting Americans who sexually exploit children in foreign countries,” said Assistant Attorney General Fisher. “The protection of children worldwide from sexual exploitation at the hands of Americans is as important as protecting children in the United States from this vile crime.”

“A jury found that defendant Kent Frank traveled abroad to sexually abuse children,” stated U.S. Attorney Acosta. “We cannot permit such individuals to seek sanctuary in our community. We will prosecute sexual abuse of children aggressively, both when the targets are children in our community and when the defendants travel to target children abroad.”

“Today’s guilty verdict is a powerful example of ICE’s resolve to target pedophiles that travel abroad to sexually exploit children,” said Julie L. Myers, Assistant Secretary for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. “This conviction proves that under the Protect Act, international borders are not barriers for predators to hide behind when preying on children.”

The case stems from the arrest of Frank by the Cambodian National Police (CNP) on Jan. 1, 2004, on debauchery charges. The CNP found four females, including the three minors that Frank was convicted of exploiting, coming out of Frank's hotel in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on the day of Frank's arrest. Assistant Attorney General Fisher and U.S. Attorney Acosta praised the efforts of the anti-trafficking unit of the CNP, particularly Captain Keo Thea, for their efforts to combat juvenile prostitution in Cambodia. The non-governmental organization AFESIP (Agir pour les Femmes En Situation Précaire, or Acting for Women in Distressing Situations), which sheltered the four females after they were found at Frank's hotel, has also been instrumental in efforts to protect and care for minor victims of prostitution.

The sex tourism charges carry a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison. The child pornography production charges carry a minimum penalty of 30 years in prison and a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

The case was investigated by Criminal Investigator Gary Phillips in the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Attache Office in Bangkok, Thailand, and Special Agents George Rodriguez and Shawn Newton in the ICE office in Miami, Florida. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Eric Morales of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida and Trial Attorney Wendy Waldron of the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice.

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