



U.S. Department of Justice

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**TWO LITTLE ROCK MEN ARRESTED ON FEDERAL
SEX TRAFFICKING AND RELATED CHARGES**

LITTLE ROCK – United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, Jane W. Duke, and Thomas J. Browne, Special Agent in Charge of the Little Rock Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation announced today the indictment and arrest of two Little Rock men on federal charges related to sex trafficking. The charges are the result of a joint investigation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; and the Little Rock Police Department.

According to the indictment handed down yesterday by the federal grand jury, Tommy Handy, also known as “Tom Tom,” and his nephew, Everett Cooney, also known as “Bear,” engaged in a conspiracy from January 2002 to May 2008 to commit commercial sex acts by utilizing minor and adult females as prostitutes. Allegations in the indictment, which was returned by a Little Rock grand jury yesterday, include that Handy and Cooney utilized force, fraud, drug addiction, and coercion to make the women engage in sexual acts with third parties for money. Handy, age 44, and Cooney, age 36, are said to have benefitted financially by receiving payments from third parties for the sex acts. The indictment references two minors and four adult females as victims of the offense.

In addition, Handy and Cooney are charged with multiple related felonies. These include: five substantive counts of sex trafficking; possessing a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence; and conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine. Handy is also charged with being a felon in possession of a firearm on July 25, 2005. Among Handy’s prior felony convictions are two drug felonies, a terroristic threatening conviction, and a terroristic act conviction. If found guilty on the federal charges, both men face a maximum sentence of life in prison and a fine in excess of \$1 million.

Cooney was taken into custody this afternoon without incident and was transported to a local jail. Handy is already incarcerated at the same facility on unrelated state charges. Both

men are expected to make initial appearances before United States Magistrate Judge Beth Deere either this afternoon or sometime tomorrow. The United States will be seeking pretrial detention of both defendants.

“Make no mistake about it, sex trafficking of the nature alleged in this case is tantamount to slavery,” stated Duke, whose office is prosecuting this case in conjunction with the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division. “Every day, thousands of human beings are bought, sold, and forced to engage in acts of prostitution against their will. Some are made to do so through violence and threats, while others do so because they have become dependent upon the traffickers for money, food, shelter, or drugs.” She added, “The crime of sex trafficking is not isolated to foreign lands. Domestic sex trafficking is a growing problem, particularly the trafficking of minors. While the Department of Justice is certainly committed to aggressively punishing the traffickers, we are equally — if not more so — committed to rescuing and recovering the victims.”

Browne echoed that commitment stating, “The FBI is committed to working with our local, state, and federal partners, as well as with national victim-based advocacy groups, to aggressively address sex trafficking cases. We use intelligence to identify traffickers and to gain insights into how they conduct their operations. Most importantly, our Victim Specialists work closely with trafficking victims not only to enlist help in prosecuting their captors, but also in ensuring that they get the support they need to cope with the horrors they have been through and to get them back on their feet.”

The case will be prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Joe J. Volpe and Civil Rights Division Trial Attorney Jim Felte.

An indictment is only an allegation, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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