



# Department of Justice

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Northern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **PAIR INDICTED, APPEAR IN COURT FOR SEX TRAFFICKING OF A MINOR**

### *Defendants Told Girl To Say She Was 19 While Engaged in Prostitution*

Atlanta, GA - LAWRENCE EDWARD PRUITT, a/k/a "Paulo," 26, of Central Islip, New York, and MARVIS NICHOLE HARRIS, a/k/a "Brianna," 26, of Columbia, South Carolina, have been indicted by a federal grand jury for sex trafficking of a minor, and this afternoon made an initial appearance before a federal magistrate.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said of the indictment, "The use of internet websites like 'Craigslist' to facilitate the sexual exploitation of minors is a growing problem. Fortunately, the efforts of federal and local law enforcement agencies in this case have freed one young woman from the emotional, psychological and physical harm caused by sex trafficking."

FBI Atlanta Special Agent in Charge Greg Jones said, "The FBI would like to thank the members of the Metro Atlanta Child Exploitation Task Force representing investigators from the FBI and the Sandy Springs, Atlanta, and College Park Police Departments. This case should send a clear message to child predators to think twice about engaging in such abhorrent criminal conduct, because the target of their activities could actually be an FBI agent."

According to United States Attorney Nahmias, the charges and other information presented in court: On February 21, 2009, local law enforcement officers, working in conjunction with the FBI, arrested PRUITT and HARRIS at a hotel in the Atlanta, Georgia, area, after agents arrived at the hotel to investigate possible illegal activity involving underage girls recruited to work as prostitutes. At the hotel, the agents encountered the 17-year old victim, whose photographs the agents had previously seen on an internet website advertising erotic services. The FBI believed that the victim, whose advertisement listed her age as 19 years, was a juvenile.

While at the hotel the victim agreed to cooperate with agents and explained that PRUITT and HARRIS brought her to the hotel to work as a prostitute. The victim further explained that, after meeting PRUITT and HARRIS on February 20, 2009, HARRIS took

nude photographs of the victim at a hotel that HARRIS then uploaded onto the “Craigslislist” internet website. Within approximately 25 minutes, HARRIS began receiving telephone calls regarding the victim’s advertisement. Subsequently, PRUITT and HARRIS allegedly caused the victim to engage in commercial sex acts with approximately 13 men between February 20, 2009, and February 21, 2009. The defendants knew that the victim was 17 years old, but cautioned her to state that she was 19 years old. The defendants kept all of the money earned by the victim.

The indictment charges PRUITT and HARRIS with one count of conspiring to commit sex trafficking of a minor, and a second count charging PRUITT with the substantive offense of sex trafficking of a minor. Count One of the indictment carries a maximum sentence of 5 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. Count Two carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison, a maximum sentence of life in prison, and a fine of up to \$250,000.

Members of the public are reminded that the indictment contains only allegations. A defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government’s burden to prove a defendant’s guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the FBI.

Assistant United States Attorneys Richard S. Moultrie, Jr. and Nekia S. Hackworth are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is [www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan).