



Department of Justice

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OMAHA MAN SENTENCED ON SEX TRAFFICKING CHARGE

COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA - On April 11, 2011, Ramon D. Heredia, age 21, of Omaha, Nebraska, was sentenced to 132 months of imprisonment for his role in a conspiracy to commit sex trafficking, announced United States Attorney Nicholas A. Klinefeldt. United States District Court Judge James E. Gritzner also sentenced Heredia to five years of supervised release following his imprisonment, and a \$100.00 special assessment for the Crime Victim Fund. The judge also ordered the forfeiture of various computer equipment and other items used in the sex trafficking, but delayed consideration of restitution to the victims of the sex trafficking pending a future hearing regarding restitution involving all defendants in this case. Ramon Heredia remains in the custody of the United States Marshal's Service pending designation of the Bureau of Prisons Facility at which he will serve his sentence.

Ramon Heredia was one of four defendants charged in a superseding indictment returned by the federal grand jury on July 1, 2010. Heredia previously entered a plea of guilty on October 21, 2010, to Count 1 of the superseding indictment, charging Conspiracy to Commit Sex Trafficking, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1594(c). The other defendants charged in the superseding indictment are Merrideth June Crane-Horton, Edwin Nathan Horton and Katherine Heredia. All four defendants have pled guilty to the charge of Conspiracy to Commit Sex Trafficking. Ramon Heredia and Katherine Heredia are husband and wife. Merrideth June Crane-Horton and Edwin Nathan Horton are wife and husband.

Merrideth June Crane-Horton was previously sentenced to 210 months of imprisonment. Edwin Nathan Horton was previously sentenced to 175 months of imprisonment. Katherine Heredia was previously sentenced to 36 months of imprisonment. All of these defendants were also sentenced to a term of 5 years of supervised release following the respective term of imprisonment of each. Crane-Horton and Horton have appealed their sentences to the Eight Circuit Court of Appeals. Those appeals are currently pending.

Each of the defendants has admitted being knowingly and intentionally involved in a conspiracy to commit sex trafficking in which a 15 year old girl was enticed into the conspiracy and then coerced to perform commercial sex acts on at least two occasions, and in which other young adult females were enticed into the conspiracy and then coerced to perform commercial sex acts for the benefit of the defendants. The conspiracy lasted from approximately August of 2007, to the arrests of Merrideth June-Crane Horton and Katherine Heredia in mid-June of 2010.

The defendants each also admitted that the coercion of the females forced to engage in prostitution included physical assaults and the threat of physical assault. Among the more serious threats were threats of murder if one or more of the prostitutes spoke to law enforcement; the threat with a knife in hand to cut the baby from the womb of one of the prostitutes when seven months pregnant, if the woman did not continue to serve as a prostitute in spite of her pregnancy; and forcing one of the women, naked, outdoors in the midst of the winter of 2009-2010, then pouring water on her, because she would not carry out the instructions of some of the conspirators regarding the commercial sex act venture.

The defendants each admitted that all of the defendants benefitted financially from the commercial sex acts, including those sex acts performed by the 15 year old girl. During the course of the conspiracy, Edwin Nathan Horton and Ramon D. Heredia gave up legitimate employment, to live off of the money from the commercial sex acts. The defendants each further

admitted that commercial sex acts on behalf of the conspiracy were performed in both Nebraska and Iowa, and that the conspiracy employed the internet in interstate commerce to solicit purchasers of the commercial sex acts.

The conspiracy was led by Merrideth June Crane-Horton, with Ramon D. Heredia assuming the role of secondary leader of the conspiracy. Katherine Heredia was identified as an integral part of the conspiracy, serving as a prostitute and manager of the conspiracy; but also as a one of the persons who suffered against her many of the serious acts of coercive behavior practiced by Merrideth Crane-Horton and Ramon Heredia, and encouraged by Edwin Nathan Horton.

The case is being prosecuted by the United States Attorneys Office for the Southern District of Iowa. The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Council Bluffs Police Department, with assistance from the Omaha Police Department. The case was initiated by a "prostitution sting operation" operated in Council Bluffs by the Council Bluffs Police Department and the FBI on January 21, 2010.

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