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## **FIVE ARRESTED IN HOUSTON SEX TRAFFICKING CASE**

WASHINGTON – Four men and one woman have been arrested on charges of conspiracy and sex trafficking of children, as well as forcing and coercing adults to engage in commercial sex acts, Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division Lanny A. Breuer, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Texas Tim Johnson, Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott, Special Agent-in-Charge Richard C. Powers of the FBI's Houston Field Office, and Houston Chief of Police Harold Hurtt announced today.

The charges against the six total defendants represent the single-largest domestic sex trafficking case ever prosecuted in the Southern District of Texas.

"The protection of the innocent and the most vulnerable among us is one of the most important obligations of law enforcement," said Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division Lanny A. Breuer. "Sex trafficking, especially the trafficking of children, is unconscionable, and federal law enforcement is working closely with state and local authorities to fight this most reprehensible sort of exploitation."

"It is a horrible reflection on our society when adults prey on the vulnerabilities of children and reduce them to indentured sex slaves," said U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Texas Tim Johnson. "Whenever and wherever offenses of such a depraved nature occur, our law enforcement community will respond with the sum of our collective prosecutorial resources."

Five of the six defendants were arrested late Monday, Aug. 24, 2009, and early Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2009, in a coordinated effort between federal and local law enforcement with warrants issued following the return of a sealed indictment by a Houston grand jury on Aug. 4, 2009.

The indictment unsealed today charges John Butler, 47; William Hornbeak, 34; Jamine Lake, 27; Andre McDaniels, 39; Kristen Land, 28; all of Houston, and Ronnie Presley, 35, formerly of Houston and currently of Tulsa, Okla., with conspiracy to traffic women and children for the purposes of commercialized sex; sex trafficking of children; sex trafficking by force, fraud and coercion; transportation of minors; transportation; and coercion and enticement.

Upon conviction, each count of sex trafficking and transportation of minors carries a maximum sentence of life in prison. Each count of transportation carries up to 10 years in

prison, charges for coercion and enticement carry up to 20 years in prison and conspiracy carries up to five years in prison. All charges carry up to a \$250,000 fine.

Butler, Hornbeak, Lake, McDaniels and Land were arrested in Houston. The government will ask the court to hold all the defendants in federal custody without bond pending trial. Presley is a fugitive and a warrant remains outstanding for his arrest. Anyone with information about Presley's whereabouts is encouraged to contact their local FBI field office, or the Houston FBI Field Office at (713)-693-5000.

According to the unsealed indictment, the defendants allegedly operated commercialized sex businesses often disguised as modeling studios, health spas, massage parlors and bikini bars in Houston, and used sexually oriented publications and Web sites to advertise their illicit business. The criminal enterprise allegedly transported women and minors to and from the Houston area and had ties to Kansas, Nevada, Arizona and Florida. Women and minors as young as 16 were allegedly enticed and coerced into prostitution and were routinely beaten and threatened. The defendants allegedly collected any proceeds the women and minors received as a result of "dates," rendering them dependent upon the defendants for basic necessities.

An indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. A defendant is presumed innocent unless convicted through due process of law.

"The defendants are charged with transporting and threatening young women with violence in order to force them into prostitution," Texas Attorney General Greg Abbot said. "A concerted, cooperative effort by state and federal law enforcement is cracking down on the horrific crime of human trafficking – and those who profit from it."

The investigation leading to the charges was conducted by the FBI's Innocence Lost Task Force and the Houston Police Department as part of the Innocence Lost National Initiative. A joint effort of the FBI, the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the initiative was founded in June 2003 to address criminal enterprises involving the domestic sex trafficking of children. At least one minor was rescued during the course of the investigation. Other minors and several adults have been returned to their families.

"From low-tech methods such as prostituting minors at truck stops, to high-tech methods such as internet advertising, our children are being used as commodities for sale or trade," FBI Special Agent-in-Charge Richard C. Powers said. "Here in Houston we have established unprecedented cooperation among law enforcement agencies that are working together to link cases, make arrests, and rescue children being sold on our streets. We will not allow our city to be a safe haven for this unconscionable activity. If you hear about it, if you suspect it, report it."

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Sherri Zack and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Angela Goodwin of the Southern District of Texas and of the Texas Attorney General's Office and Trial Attorney Michael Yoon of CEOS.

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