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NEWS

**Memphis Pimp Sentenced To 27 Years For Child Sex Trafficking**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 13, 2012

Memphis, TN – Maurice Mabon, 24, of Memphis, was sentenced to 27 years in prison today for child sex trafficking by Chief United States District Judge Jon Phipps McCalla, announced United States Attorney Edward L. Stanton, III; Assistant Attorney General Lanny Breuer of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice; and Special Agent in Charge of the Memphis Federal Bureau of Investigation Field Office Aaron T. Ford. Mabon's co-defendant, Chauntta Lewis, 27, of Moscow, Tennessee, was sentenced to 54 months on a related charge.

On April 6, 2012, a federal jury convicted Mabon of child sex trafficking, attempted child sex trafficking, and conspiracy to commit child sex trafficking for his role in advertising a 15-year-old girl for prostitution on the website <http://www.backpage.com> Backpage.com on April 16, 2011. He was also found guilty of being a felon in possession of ammunition.

Lewis pled guilty on March 29, 2012, to using a facility of interstate commerce in furtherance of child prostitution. A third co-defendant, Arieke Lester, pled guilty on March 30, 2012 and is set to be sentenced on August 10, 2012.

Parole is not a possibility in the federal system.

The evidence at trial showed, among other things, that Mabon took numerous photographs of the 15-year-old victim and Lewis modeling lingerie in his bedroom, then posted those photographs as part of an advertisement for prostitution on the website Backpage.com. Mabon, Lewis, and Lester then drove the 15-year-old to an address provided by an individual responding to the ad for the purpose of having her and Lewis engage in a commercial sex act. A suspicious neighbor contacted the Shelby County Sheriff's Department and deputies intervened in time to frustrate the scheme.

A later search of Mabon's home led to the discovery of 12 live rounds of 9 mm Luger ammunition, 17 live rounds of 7.65 ammunition, 25 live rounds of .380 ammunition, 20 live rounds of .45 Auto ammunition, and 8 spent rounds of 7.62 ammunition. As a previously convicted felon, Mabon was prohibited by federal law from possessing any ammunition.

During the search, investigators located a handwritten document in Mabon's bedroom identifying his long-term goals to start an escort service and open a brothel.

"The message from today's sentencing is unequivocally loud and clear: if you sexually exploit a child for profit, you will spend decades in a federal prison," said United States Attorney Stanton. "Working with our law enforcement partners, we will remain relentless in doing whatever it takes to protect our most vulnerable citizens – our children – from those individuals who engage in sex trafficking."

"This sentencing should be taken as a warning to anyone who seeks to profit from the victimization of children in sex trafficking schemes, that the FBI and its law enforcement partners will target, investigate, and bring you to justice to pay for your crimes," said Aaron T. Ford, Special Agent in Charge of the Memphis Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. "Human sex trafficking is one of the fastest growing criminal businesses in the world, and the FBI takes seriously its role in working to eradicate it."

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation working in conjunction with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and the Shelby County Sheriff's Office. Tracey Harris Branch served as lead investigator. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jonathan Skrmetti and Trial Attorney Keith Becker from the U.S. Department of Justice Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by U.S. Attorneys' Offices and CEOS, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals, who exploit children, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

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