



Department of Justice

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TWO HOMESTEAD MEN SENTENCED FOR HOLDING A MINOR TO A CONDITION OF PEONAGE

MIAMI, FLORIDA - R. Alexander Acosta, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and Jonathan I. Solomon, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Miami Field Office (FBI), announced today that on January 19, 2007, defendant **Kareem Jackson**, 30, and **Eriverto Cotto**, 28, both of Homestead, were sentenced by United States District Court Judge Ursula Ungaro-Benages. Both defendants pled guilty to one count of holding a 17-year-old female to a condition of peonage, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1581. Jackson was sentenced to 84 months in prison, and Cotto was sentenced to 151 months in prison.

The defendants' arrest resulted from the work of the FBI's Minor Vice Task Force, which is a partnership between the FBI, the City of Miami Police Department, the Miami-Dade Police Department, and the Miami Beach Police Department, as a part of the "Innocence Lost" initiative. The "Innocence Lost" initiative is a joint initiative between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Justice, in partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which focuses on child victims of interstate sex trafficking.

According to the evidence presented in Court, on approximately June 5, 2006, Kareem Jackson and Eriverto Cotto began holding a 17-year-old female against her will at Jackson's Homestead residence. Acting as the girl's pimp, Jackson arranged for her to perform acts of prostitution to repay an alleged debt to Jackson. Cotto was Jackson's driver and bodyguard.

On June 8, 2006, Jackson sent the juvenile to a Miami hotel room in response to a call for one or more prostitutes. Unbeknownst to Jackson, undercover City of Miami Police Department detectives had made the call. Shortly after the minor arrived at the designated room, the detectives detained her. The girl explained to the detectives that she was 17 years old and had been held captive. The detectives contacted the Minor Vice Task Force. On June 14, 2006, Kareem Jackson and Eriverto Cotto were arrested after they returned to the location.

Mr. Acosta commended the investigative efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Minor Vice Task Force, the City of Miami Police Department, and the Miami-Dade Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Marcus A. Christian.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office For the Southern District of Florida at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at <http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov> or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the U.S. Attorneys Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov/.