



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

ALEXANDRIA NEWPORT NEWS NORFOLK RICHMOND

CHUCK ROSENBERG, UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

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PIMP AND MANAGING PROSTITUTE CONVICTED OF PROSTITUTING MINOR

(Alexandria, VA) United States Attorney Chuck Rosenberg announced today that Erny Winston Wells, also known as “JP,” and “Just Pimpin,” pled guilty to conspiracy to transport individuals for illegal sexual activity and to produce child pornography, transportation of individuals in interstate commerce to engage in prostitution, and transportation of a minor to engage in prostitution, before Judge Leonie M. Brinkema in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. A codefendant, Andrea Castro, also known as “Nyala,” pled guilty last week in the same case to transportation of individuals in interstate commerce to engage in prostitution, and transportation of a minor to engage in prostitution.

According to the statement of facts filed in the case, Wells was a pimp who operated in Los Angeles, California. Castro, who worked as a prostitute for Wells for several years, assisted him in operating his business.

Between January and July of this year, Wells and Castro recruited several females to work as prostitutes. Wells arranged for several of the prostitutes to travel to the Washington, D.C. area to engage in prostitution. Wells used the internet to advertise his prostitution business. He arranged for photographers to photograph the prostitutes in seductive and nude, or partially nude, poses. The photographs were then used to create advertisements on such internet websites as craigslist.org and cityvibe.com.

In June, Wells and Castro recruited a 14 year-old girl in Los Angeles to work as a prostitute for Wells. He had sexually explicit photographs taken of the girl to advertise her as a prostitute. On June 22, 2006, he arranged for Castro, the 14 year-old, and three other prostitutes to fly from California to Washington, D.C. to engage in prostitution. On June 24, 2006, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents and Alexandria Police Department officers raided a room at the Washington Suites Hotel in Alexandria, Virginia, where Castro and the 14 year-old girl had been prostituting for two days.

This prosecution is part of the district's anti-sex trafficking initiative and Project Safe Childhood initiative. The convictions are the result of the coordinated efforts of federal and local law enforcement agencies. The Federal Bureau of Investigation in Northern Virginia and Los Angeles worked with local law enforcement officers in Alexandria and Los Angeles during the investigation of this case. Both defendants face a mandatory minimum sentence of five years imprisonment and a maximum sentence of thirty years imprisonment on the transportation of a minor to engage in prostitution conviction alone.

Mr. Rosenberg praised the work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Alexandria Police Department, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, Los Angeles Police Department, California Highway Patrol, Orange County Sheriff's Department and the California Department of Justice. He also acknowledges the Department of Justice Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section for its assistance in this prosecution.

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