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NEWS



Memphis Man Found Guilty Of Child Sex Trafficking And Firearms Charges

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 6, 2012

Memphis, TN- A federal jury in Memphis has convicted Maurice Mabon, 23, of Memphis, on child sex trafficking charges and a firearms offense, announced United States Attorney for the Western District of Tennessee Edward L. Stanton, III; Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; and Special Agent in Charge Aaron T. Ford of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Memphis Field Office.

Mabon was found guilty 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 backpage.com. He was also found guilty of being a felon in possession of ammunition.

Mabon faces a mandatory sentence of at least ten years in prison and faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. He will be sentenced on July 13, 2012, by Chief U.S. District Judge Jon Phipps McCalla. Mabon's co-defendants, Arieke Lester and Chaunta Lewis, pled guilty to related charges last week. Lester will be sentenced on August 10, 2012, and faces up to life in prison. Lewis will be sentenced on June 6, 2012, and faces up to twenty years imprisonment.

The evidence at trial showed, among other things, that Mabon posted the advertisement to backpage.com after taking numerous photographs of the 15-year-old victim in lingerie. Mabon used some of the photographs in the advertisement. Mabon and his co-defendants then drove the 15-year-old to an address provided by an individual responding to the advertisement. 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 eight spent rounds of 7.62 ammunition. As a previously-convicted felon, Mabon was prohibited from possessing any ammunition by federal law.

United States Attorney Edward L. Stanton, III, stated: "Child sex traffickers like Maurice Mabon prey upon young victims because they are vulnerable and often defenseless. The jury's guilty verdict underscores this office's relentless commitment to working with our law enforcement partners to prosecute and bring to justice those who exploit children for profit."

"Mr. Mabon used the Internet to facilitate sex trafficking of a minor," said assistant Attorney General Breuer. "The jury's guilty verdict ensures that he will now be imprisoned for his crimes. We will continue to prioritize the fight against predators who exploit children for profit or any other reason."

"The cruel exploitation of children will not be tolerated, and the FBI, along with our law enforcement partners, is committed to targeting those who prey on innocent juveniles," said Aaron T. Ford, Special Agent in Charge of the Memphis Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. "This conviction is a message to those who would seek to take part in human trafficking or commercial sex trafficking, that you will be investigated, brought to justice, and held accountable."

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 the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) in the Justice Department's Criminal Division, 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.projectsafchildhood.gov.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation working with the Shelby County Sheriff's Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan Skrmetti of the Western District of Tennessee and Trial Attorney Keith

Becker of the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) in the Justice Department's Criminal Division.

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