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News Releases

JULY 28, 2011 ALEXANDRIA, VA

MS-13 Gang leader convicted of sex trafficking of a child

ALEXANDRIA, Va. - A Salvadoran national and MS-13 gang leader was convicted today of prostituting a 12-year-old female with clients throughout northern Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C, following an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

Jose Ciro Juarez-Santamaria, 24, indicted on May 12, 2011, was convicted today of conspiracy, sex trafficking, and transportation of a minor for prostitution. He faces a mandatory minimum term of 15 years in prison and a maximum penalty of life in prison when he is sentenced on Oct. 28, 2011.

"Forcing girls into prostitution for the purpose of turning a profit is not only criminal, it is intolerable," said John P. Torres, Special Agent in Charge for ICE HSI in Washington, D.C.. "ICE's Homeland Security Investigations is committed to working with our law enforcement partners to investigate sex trafficking, as well as working with our local non-governmental, community-based, and faith-based organizations to identify, rescue and assist victims of trafficking."

"From the moment he laid eyes on the victim, Juarez-Santamaria did not see a young 12-year-old runaway in need of help," said Neil H. MacBride, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia. "He saw a money-making opportunity for him and his gang and began prostituting her the very next day. No child should ever have to suffer what this victim endured, and we will continue to pursue MS-13 and other criminal organizations that prey upon young girls and enslave them through sex trafficking."

According to court records and evidence at the trial, Juarez-Santamaria joined MS-13 while in El Salvador. He was a leader of the Pinos Locos clique of MS-13 and known by the gang as "Sniper." At a Halloween party in Oxon Hill, Md. on Oct. 31, 2009, Juarez-Santamaria met a 12-year-old runaway who asked for his help in finding a place to stay. Instead, the very next day, Juarez-Santamaria began prostituting the victim throughout the metro-D.C. area.

The victim testified at trial how Juarez-Santamaria and his fellow gang members would constantly call customers in an effort to drum up business. The victim was prostituted from October through December 2009 and, at times, was providing sex for money every day of the week. To keep the victim compliant, Juarez-Santamaria and others would ply her with alcohol and marijuana. The prostitution took place at various businesses, homes, apartments, and hotels in the Northern Virginia area. Juarez-Santamaria also allowed MS-13 gang members to have sex with the victim free of charge.

Evidence at the trial showed that Juarez-Santamaria generally charged \$40 for fifteen minutes of sex, but would sometimes charge more depending on what the customer wanted. At times, he would take the victim to a location where customers would be lined up waiting for her.

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