



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Florida

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HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY MAN ARRESTED FOR SEX TRAFFICKING OF MINOR

Tampa, FL - United States Attorney A. Brian Albritton announces the arrest on a criminal complaint of Mario Alberto Laguna-Guerrero (age 25, of Hillsborough County) for the sex trafficking of a minor. If convicted as charged, Laguna-Guerrero faces a maximum penalty of life in federal prison. Laguna-Guerrero was arrested this morning and made his initial appearance in federal court at 4:00 p.m. before Magistrate Judge Mark A. Pizzo. Judge Pizzo ordered him to remain in custody with no bond.

According to the complaint, in 2008 in Hillsborough County, Laguna-Guerrero caused a then-16 year old girl, who is developmentally challenged, to perform commercial sex acts. He transported her to various locations, primarily to migrant farm worker camps in eastern Hillsborough County, and he took money from individuals who paid to have sex with her. Laguna-Guerrero also asked the victim to ask her friends to be prostitutes for him.

This investigation was initiated by the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, whose Deputy enlisted the assistance of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The agencies contacted the Clearwater Area Human Trafficking Task Force (CAHTTF), which began a full-scale, multi-agency investigation leading to today's arrest.

U.S. Attorney Albritton praised the work of the agencies involved, stating, "This type of terrible crime is very unsettling, but it is rewarding to know an arrest was made because of the commitment and partnership of numerous Tampa Bay area law enforcement agencies and their dedicated investigators."

Sue McCormick, Special Agent in Charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Tampa, said, "U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents in Tampa work closely with our local law enforcement partners and nongovernmental organizations to identify, rescue and provide assistance for human trafficking victims. ICE will continue to combat this modern day form of slavery in its efforts to stop those who would exploit human beings for their own financial gain."

Lt. George Koder, the Commander of the Clearwater/Tampa Bay Human Trafficking Task Force, said, "This case really exemplifies teamwork and multi-jurisdictional communication and coordination from local, to state, to federal participation. The goals of the task force are to rescue and restore the victims, to prosecute the traffickers, and to educate the public about human trafficking by collaborating with governmental and non-governmental agencies. Today, those efforts worked seamlessly, and it is encouraging to see so many agencies working so hard collectively to help the victims of modern slavery."

A complaint is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent unless, and until, proven guilty.

This case was investigated by the Clearwater Area Human Trafficking Task Force (CAHTTF), a law enforcement and social services coalition to fight human trafficking in the Tampa Bay Area. CAHTTF consists of agents and officers of U.S. Immigration and

Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Clearwater Police Department, the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida, among others. The CAHTTF conducts training for all newly funded Department of Justice (DOJ) sponsored Human Trafficking Task Forces as well as police departments nationwide. Additionally, the CAHTTF works closely with non-governmental and social service organizations in its human trafficking efforts. These organizations routinely forward information regarding potential victims and trafficking networks to the Task Force for investigation. The Task Force works with the organizations to provide training to other law enforcement agencies and conduct outreach to other governmental agencies, such as foreign consulates, for the purpose of identifying potential victims that they may encounter at the local consulate offices.

Anyone who knows or suspects that someone is being trafficked, either through by being forced into prostitution or by being forced to work in a modern version of slavery, should contact the ICE tip line anonymously at 866-DHS-2-ICE.

This case will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Thomas N. Palermo.