

U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
District of Connecticut
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 6, 2016

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**WOMAN INVOLVED IN SEX TRAFFICKING OF MINORS
CONSPIRACY SENTENCED TO 5 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON**

Deirdre M. Daly, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that that KAYLA WALTERS, 24, of New York, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Robert N. Chatigny in Hartford to 60 months of imprisonment, followed by six years of supervised release, for conspiring to commit sex trafficking of minors.

According to court documents and statements made in court, in September 2012, Edward Thomas, also known as "Fire," a New York-based pimp, answered an internet prostitution advertisement for a 17-year-old girl ("MV1") in Oregon. Thomas, with the assistance of WALTERS, recruited and enticed MV1 to travel to New York to work for Thomas. MV1 agreed and traveled to New York with a second girl ("MV2"), who was 16 at the time, using bus tickets purchased by Thomas. Thomas discussed with both MV1 and MV2 that they would be prostituting for him in New York and Connecticut.

After MV1 and MV2 arrived in New York, Thomas drove the two minor girls to a hotel in Milford, Connecticut, where they met WALTERS and posted prostitution advertisements. In Milford, MV1 and MV2 saw customers for commercial sex acts at the direction of Thomas and WALTERS. MV2 escaped from a hotel room window after several hours, but MV1 continued to work for Thomas and WALTERS for about a month, turning over all of the money she earned in prostitution to Thomas and WALTERS. When MV1 attempted to leave, Thomas forcibly restrained her. Ultimately, MV1 was recovered for the first time by the FBI and local police in Milford on November 8, 2012. Law enforcement seized nearly \$4,000 in cash from Thomas during this recover, along with several computers and cellular phones.

Thomas recruited MV1 a second time in July 2013 and again paid for her travel from Oregon to the East Coast. After Thomas sent WALTERS and MV1 to Connecticut to make money for him, the FBI and local police again recovered MV1 from a hotel in Milford.

Thomas and WALTERS have been detained since their arrests on February 28, 2014.

On November 10, 2014, WALTERS pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit sex trafficking of a minor.

On January 26, 2015, a jury found Thomas guilty of one count of conspiracy to commit sex trafficking of a minor and two counts of sex trafficking of a minor. On November 2, 2015, he was sentenced to 210 months of imprisonment.

This matter was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Connecticut Child Exploitation Task Force, which includes federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. The Stratford and Milford Police Departments assisted the investigation.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys David E. Novick and Sarala V. Nagala.

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