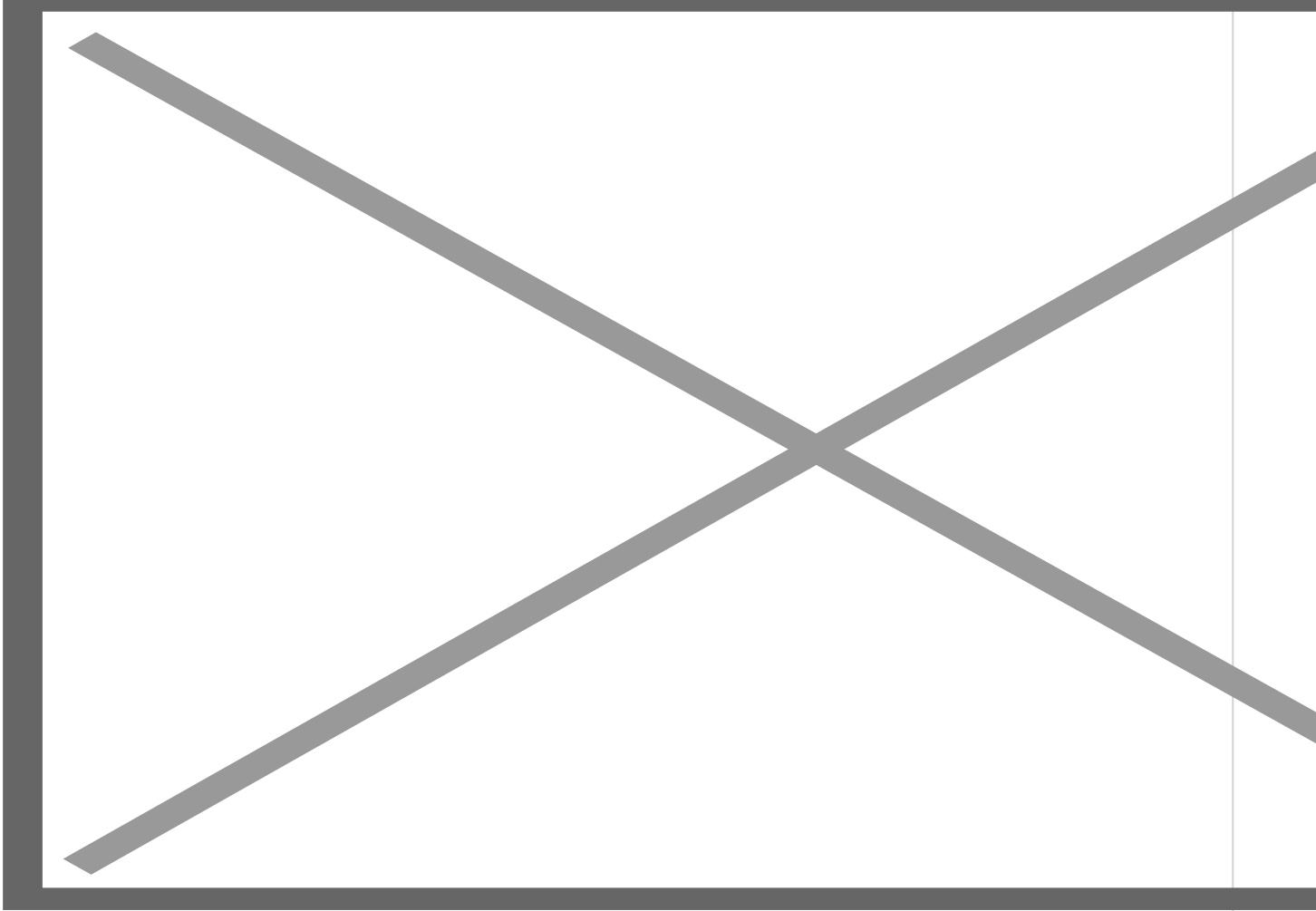


U.S. federal prosecutors say high-end brothels counted elected officials, tech execs, military officers as clients

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Washington, November 12 (RHC)-- In the U.S., three people have been arrested for operating high-end brothels with potentially hundreds of clients including elected officials, technology and pharmaceutical executives, military officers, professors, doctors, and government contractors with security clearance, according to federal prosecutors.

"This commercial sex ring was built on secrecy and exclusivity, catering to a wealthy and well-connected clientele," Acting U.S. Attorney Joshua Levy said at a news briefing. "And business was booming – until today."

Since at least July 2020, an interstate network of multiple brothels had spanned across Cambridge and Watertown, Massachusetts, officials said, as well as Fairfax and Tysons, Virginia, the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Massachusetts announced Wednesday.

Han Lee of Cambridge, Massachusetts, James Lee of Torrance, California, and Junmyung Lee of Dedham, Massachusetts, were arrested and charged with conspiracy to coerce and entice to travel to engage in illegal sexual activity. It is punishable by up to five years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a \$250,000 fine.

Sex buyers were not identified, but court documents said this was not to protect anonymity but instead due to investigations into their role being "active and ongoing," which could have major implications for involved people as new information comes to light.

Two websites purported to advertise nude models for professional photography served as a front for escort and sex services in greater Boston and eastern Virginia, according to an affidavit filed in court by a Homeland Security Investigations agent.

Levy said prospective buyers first had to respond to a survey and provide information online, including driver's license photos, employer information, and credit card details. They often paid a monthly fee to be a part of the "illicit club," he noted.

The operators rented high-end apartment complexes for brothel locations, with monthly rent up to \$3,664, which they furnished and maintained, the U.S. Attorney's Office said. They also coordinated the women's flights and transportation between the brothels and airports.

The criminal business charged about \$350 to \$600 per hour for sex acts and concealed hundreds of thousands of dollars of revenue by deposits to personal bank accounts, peer-to-peer transfers, and money orders.

The affidavit indicated the women may have been "persuaded, induced, and enticed" to travel to Massachusetts and Virginia to engage in commercial sex. The operators allegedly used "coercive tactics to maintain the fluidity and effectiveness of the rotation of women," including delivering food to them so they didn't have to leave the building and locking the door behind them after exiting brothel units, the affidavit said.

Officials described the operation as a prostitution ring where the women were paid to perform sex acts. Experts have warned traffickers often use strategies to initially entice people to join their operation before imposing physical and psychological tactics to keep them.

The clandestine corridors of Massachusetts and eastern Virginia have been exposed to the unsettling revelation of a 'high-end' commercial sex ring. Catering to an affluent clientele that spanned across elected officials, military officers, and business executives, this operation has sent shockwaves through the communities involved. The intricate web of this sex operation surfaced as part of a federal investigation, revealing a secretive enterprise with a client base that crossed state lines.

The charged individuals face accusations of conspiracy to coerce and entice others to travel to engage in illicit sexual activities. This alleged scheme was rooted in facilitating sexual services to wealthy clients. These clients reportedly paid hefty sums, with some subscribing to a monthly membership for hassle-free access to services.

The operation was characterized by its exclusivity and clandestine nature, using high-end apartments as brothels and professional photography websites as a front for their illegal activities. This wide-spanning clientele affirms the vast influence and reach of this operation.

The investigation, comprising surveillance, phone records, and interviews with around 20 clients, exposed the inner workings of this sex ring. The accused individuals are believed to have made significant profits from this operation, with a sum running into hundreds of thousands of dollars generated through this scheme.

This case highlights the extensive prevalence of human trafficking, particularly in the context of high-end commercial sex operations catering to affluent and influential individuals. It demonstrates the lengths to which these operations go to maintain secrecy, using sophisticated tactics such as false advertising and exclusive membership processes.

The involvement of individuals from various professional backgrounds underscores the pervasive nature of this issue. This case emphasizes the need for continued vigilance and awareness to combat human trafficking and related offenses. Legislation such as the Trafficking Victims Protection Act provides tools and resources to combat such offenses.

The demographics of individuals involved in human trafficking offenses challenge common misconceptions, with a significant portion of defendants being U.S. citizens and first-time offenders. The case serves as a reminder of the urgent need to address human trafficking, particularly sophisticated commercial sex operations targeting affluent clients. It underscores the importance of ongoing efforts to combat human trafficking, raise awareness, and provide support for victims.

As the investigation continues, this case stands as a testament to the complexities and challenges posed by human trafficking. It emphasizes the far-reaching implications of human trafficking and the importance of concerted efforts to address this pressing issue.

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