

OFFICE OF THE ANOKA COUNTY ATTORNEY

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June 30, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

11 CHARGED IN SEX TRAFFICKING STING

The Anoka County Attorney's Office has charged 11 of 19 people arrested in a two-day undercover law enforcement trafficking sting. Six more cases are under review by this office, and charges are likely. At this point, the remaining two cases have not been referred to this office.

The defendants were arrested after soliciting sex acts from undercover officers who were posing as children. Each defendant is charged with one felony count of Electronic Solicitation of a Child (Engage in Sexual Communication).

"Earlier this week, law enforcement from multiple agencies executed a well-organized initiative targeting those with desires to prey upon the youth of our community. Simply stated, this will not be tolerated," said Paul Young, Chief of the Anoka County Attorney's Office Criminal Division. "Kudos to all of the law enforcement experience and labor channeled for this investigation."

Young added, "While this investigation and these crimes did not involve any 'real' children, we know these are not 'victimless' crimes. This type of crime – predatory conduct in search of exploiting children – has no geographic boundary and impacts our whole community."

The defendants who have been charged* by the ACAO are:

Jesus A. Sandoval-Rogel, age 27, of St. Paul

- Court file number 02-CR-17-3995
- First court appearance 6/29; released without bail
- Next hearing 7/27

Brandon W. Blackwell, age 20, of Savage

- 02-CR-17-3997
- First court appearance 6/29; released without bail
- Next hearing 7/27

Andrew J. Eilers, age 21, of Clear Lake

- 02-CR-17-3996
- First court appearance 6/29; released without bail

- Next hearing 7/27

Vadim S. Tsvik, age 28, of Blaine

- 02-CR-17-4017
- First court appearance 6/30; released without bail
- Next hearing 7/24

Joseph D. Paradise, age 28, of Fridley

- 02-CR-17-4012
- First court appearance 6/30; released without bail
- Next hearing 7/24

Arnold K. Leas, age 54, of Fridley

- 02-CR-17-4013
- First court appearance 6/30; released without bail
- Next hearing 7/24

Steve Yang, age 24, of Chanhassen

- 02-CR-17-4014
- First court appearance 6/30; released without bail
- Next hearing 7/24

Chad J. Eckel, age 31, of North Branch

- 02-CR-17-4038
- First court appearance 6/30; \$5,000 bail (w/ conditions) or \$50,000 (no conditions)
- Next hearing 7/24

Shane L. Jourdain, age 22, city unknown

- 02-CR-17-4035
- First court appearance 6/30; \$1,000 bail (w/ conditions) or \$12,000 (no conditions)
- Next hearing 7/24

Michael D. Griep, age 29, of Columbia Heights

- 02-CR-17-4036
- First court appearance 6/30; released without bail
- Next hearing 7/24

Jose A. Vasquez-Reyes, age 28, of Cottage Grove

- 02-CR-17-4039
- First court appearance 6/30; released without bail
- Next hearing 7/24

The criminal complaints can be found on the Anoka County Attorney's Office [website](#).

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety's initial news release is attached for reference.

*Please keep in mind that these individuals have been charged, but they have not been convicted of a crime. They are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Alcohol and Gambling
Enforcement

Bureau of Criminal
Apprehension

Driver and Vehicle Services

Emergency Communication
Networks

Homeland Security and
Emergency Management

Minnesota State Patrol

Office of Communications

Office of Justice Programs

Office of Pipeline Safety

Office of Traffic Safety

State Fire Marshal

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 29, 2017

Undercover Operation Results in 19 Arrests and Rescue of Nearly a Dozen Trafficking Victims

ST. PAUL — More than a dozen people were taken into custody following a two-day undercover operation focusing on human trafficking and solicitation.

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) led the operation with assistance from the Fridley Police Department and the Anoka County Sheriff's Office. The Plymouth Police Department and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office provided additional assistance.

Over the past two days, a sting operation was conducted utilizing undercover agents and investigators. The subjects believed they were going to meet with a child 13- to 15-years-old for sex. Separately, agents targeted online solicitation using multiple social media platforms.

By the time the operation ended this afternoon, investigators arrested 19 people who were all booked into the Anoka County Jail. All are from the greater Twin Cities area. Charges are expected within the next few days.

- 15 men were taken into custody on probable cause solicitation of a child
- 2 men and 2 women were taken into custody on probable cause felony human trafficking
- 10 women were rescued from sex trafficking, including one juvenile

The juvenile victim was placed in protective custody in Anoka County. The nine adult victims were identified, interviewed and released following Minnesota Safe Harbor guidelines. While the operation has ended, these remain active and ongoing investigations.

The Minnesota ICAC Task Force investigates incidents of child exploitation. It is led by agents in the BCA Predatory Crimes Section, which conducts human trafficking, child exploitation and predatory offender investigations.

About the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension

The BCA provides investigative and specialized law enforcement services to prevent and solve crimes in partnership with law enforcement, public safety and criminal justice agencies. Services include forensic laboratory analysis, criminal histories, investigations and criminal justice training.

About the Minnesota Department Public Safety

DPS comprises 11 divisions where 2,100 employees operate programs in the areas of law enforcement, crime victim assistance, traffic safety, alcohol and gambling, emergency communications, fire safety, pipeline safety, driver licensing, vehicle registration and emergency management. DPS activity is anchored by three core principles: education, enforcement and prevention.

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