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WESTERN DISTRICT *of* TENNESSEE

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NEWS



## Tennessee Man Sentenced To 168 Months For Child Sex Trafficking Conspiracy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 27, 2012

Memphis, TN – Arieke Lester, age 31, of Somerville, Tennessee, was sentenced by Chief United States District Judge Jon Phipps McCalla to 168 months in prison for his role in a child sex trafficking conspiracy, announced Edward L. Stanton, III, United States Attorney for the Western District of Tennessee, and Aaron Ford, Special Agent in Charge of the Memphis Federal Bureau of Investigation Field Office. Lester's co-defendant, Maurice Mabon, age 24, of Memphis, Tennessee, was previously sentenced to 27 years in prison for related charges, while co-defendant Chaunta Lewis, age 27, of Moscow, Tennessee, received a 54-month sentence for use of a facility of interstate commerce to promote child prostitution.

Lester pled guilty on March 30, 2012, to conspiracy to engage in child sex trafficking. He admitted to participating in a scheme to advertise a 15-year-old girl for prostitution on the website backpage.com and then deliver her to people who responded to the ad. Chaunta Lewis also pled guilty, while Maurice Mabon proceeded to trial and was convicted by a federal jury on four separate counts relating to child sex trafficking and illegal possession of a firearm by a felon.

Parole is not a possibility in the federal system.

"The U.S. Department of Justice has zero tolerance for anybody who sexually exploits a child for profit," said United States Attorney Edward L. Stanton, III. "This lengthy sentence is just another example of the severe consequences child sex traffickers will face, and of the effective cooperation between federal and local agencies committed to bringing them to justice and rescuing their victims."

"The FBI and its law enforcement partners combat human trafficking by aggressively investigating those who brutally and callously prostitute children," said Aaron T. Ford, Special Agent in Charge of the Memphis Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. "This sentencing is the outcome of the hard work by our task force and prosecutors to ensure that we get those who prey on minors off of our streets."

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation working in conjunction with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and the Shelby County Sheriff's Office. Tracey Harris Branch served as lead investigator. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jonathan Skrmetti and Trial Attorney Keith Becker from the U.S. Department of Justice Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS).

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by U.S. Attorneys' Offices and CEOS, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit [www.projectsafchildhood.gov](http://www.projectsafchildhood.gov).

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