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JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, August 11, 2014

MS-13 Gang Member Sentenced to 60 Months in Prison for Obstruction of Child Sex Trafficking Laws

Victor Manuel Contreras, 29, of Manassas, Virginia, was sentenced to serve 60 months in prison, followed by five years of supervised release, for obstructing and interfering with the enforcement of federal child sex trafficking laws.

Assistant Attorney General Leslie R. Caldwell of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Dana J. Boente of the Eastern District of Virginia and Special Agent in Charge Clark E. Settle of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) made the announcement. The sentence was imposed by U.S. District Judge Leonie M. Brinkema of the Eastern District of Virginia.

According to court documents and statements made at his plea hearing, in July 2011, Contreras engaged in chats via Facebook with a minor female. In those chats, she indicated a desire to run away from home, and Contreras told her that he would help her if she did so. Once the girl ran away from home, Contreras arranged for her to stay with other MS-13 gang members, who subsequently coerced her into prostitution. When law enforcement officers interviewed Contreras during their search for the girl, Contreras lied about his relationship with her, and then called other MS-13 gang members to warn them that law enforcement officers were looking for her.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who sexually exploit children, and to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.justice.gov/psc. For more information about Internet safety education, please visit www.justice.gov/psc and click on the "resources" tab on the left of the page.

The case was investigated by HSI, and prosecuted by Trial Attorney Alicia Yass of the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Mary K. Daly of the Eastern District of Virginia.

14-843

Criminal Division



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