



ERIK NASARENKO
VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NEWS RELEASE



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Fresno Man Pleads Guilty to Child Sex Trafficking

VENTURA, Calif. - On April 13, 2023, Javontay Bess (DOB 03/26/96), of Fresno, pled guilty in Ventura County Superior Court to felony human trafficking, by causing a minor to engage in a commercial sex act. He also admitted to the special allegation of committing the crime while on probation or parole.

In May 2019, an alert citizen called the Ventura County Sheriff's Office to report suspicious circumstances and possible sex trafficking at a Camarillo motel. Ventura County Sheriff's detectives initiated an investigation into the sexual exploitation of a 16-year-old victim. Both the minor victim as well as the suspect were from outside Ventura County. Detectives ultimately determined that Bess used online advertising to arrange commercial sex acts with the 16-year-old victim at Ventura County motels.

Bess is currently serving a prison sentence in Kern County after being convicted of multiple felonies including assault with a firearm, assault on a peace officer and child endangerment. He is scheduled for sentencing in Ventura County on May 22, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. in courtroom 12.

Deputy District Attorney Rikole Kelly, a member of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office Sexual Assault Human Trafficking Unit, prosecuted the case.

"Human beings are not for sale, and particularly not children," Kelly said. "Sexual exploitation is human trafficking, and it will not be tolerated in Ventura County. The case against Javontay Bess marks a victory in the fight against human trafficking and we will continue to aggressively investigate and prosecute these crimes."

Deputy District Attorney Kelly is also a member of the Ventura County Human Trafficking Task Force (VCHTTF), which was established in 2019. Co-led by the Ventura County Sheriff's Office and Interface Children & Family Services, the task force works to prevent, identify, investigate, disrupt and prosecute human trafficking crimes in our community. In addition to holding

perpetrators accountable, VCHTTF provides services and resources to victims, spreads community awareness and compiles county-level data and statistics.

Sex trafficking is not a victimless crime. Victims are often young girls and they are typically controlled through force or fear. Combating this problem is a top priority within the Ventura County District Attorney's Office. Community members are urged to become more aware of the pervasive problem of human trafficking and to call 911 to report suspicious activity.

Case: 2019019111

Defendant Information:

Javontay Bess (DOB 03/26/96)

Fresno

Charges Pled To:

- PC 236.1(c)(1) - Felony human trafficking of a minor

Special Allegation:

- CRC 4.421(b)(4) - Defendant was on parole at the time of the offense

