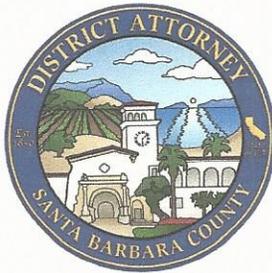


OFFICE OF THE  
**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA  
**JOYCE E. DUDLEY**  
District Attorney



DA 02-294

RELEASE NUMBER

March 13, 2015

RELEASE DATE

APPROVED BY *Joyce E. Dudley*  
JOYCE E. DUDLEY, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Von Nguyen, Deputy District Attorney

CONTACT (805) 568-2311

\*\*\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\*\*\*

March 13, 2015

**Re: *People v. Brannon Pitcher***

District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley announced today that defendant Brannon Pitcher was sentenced to 38 years to life in State Prison. Pitcher was convicted in the County's first human trafficking trial. He was found guilty of two counts of human trafficking of a minor as well as the Special Allegation that he used force, fear, fraud, deceit, and violence while trafficking the minor victim. Defendant was also found guilty of one misdemeanor count of possession of methamphetamine and 73 counts of disobeying a court order. Judge Brian Hill also found that the defendant suffered a prior strike, a prior serious felony, and had two prior prison commitments.

In July of 2013, while the FBI was investigating a case involving a separate human trafficking victim in Florida, agents discovered text messages from the victim detailing her fear and the abuse she was suffering at the hands of her trafficker, the defendant, Brannon Pitcher. FBI agents, with assistance of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and the Santa Barbara Police Department, tracked the victim down to a hotel in the City of Santa Barbara.

On August 22, 2013, when officers entered the hotel room to recover the victim, defendant Pitcher was apprehended jumping out of the hotel room's second-story window. Officers located \$700 in his clothing. The victim possessed no money. On the date of his arrest, the defendant was attempting to recruit another 16-year old from San Diego County to also prostitute for him.

During the investigation of the case, it was learned that in May of 2013, Defendant Pitcher met the present 16-year old victim through an online escort internet site. He began communicating with her and eventually met her in Maryland. Once in Maryland the defendant immediately began trafficking her. From Maryland, the defendant took the victim to Virginia, Washington D.C., and ultimately back to defendant's home state of California. They were picked up in the Bay Area by the defendant's mother.

Immediately the defendant put the victim on the street to "work," including the dangerous and well-known prostitution track, International Boulevard in Oakland, California. Pitcher then took her to several counties throughout California, including San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura, for the purpose of trafficking her. The victim was forced to turn over all of the money she earned to the defendant. The defendant gave methamphetamine to the victim to gain her compliance. He also physically abused her on several occasions. The victim believed, based on the defendant's promises, that he would get her out of the life of prostitution, become her boyfriend, and someday marry her.

After the defendant's arrest, and while in custody in county jail, the defendant began calling the victim. During the month of November of 2013, the defendant trafficked the victim from behind bars. He repeatedly contacted her and directed her how, where, and when to prostitute. He even compelled her, from jail, to prostitute herself in order to put money on his phone, on his jail "books," and to retain an attorney for him.

□ SANTA BARBARA OFFICE  
1112 Santa Barbara Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2300  
Fax: (805) 568-2398

□ SANTA MARIA OFFICE  
312-D East Cook Street  
Santa Maria, CA 93454  
(805) 346-7540  
Fax: (805) 346-7588

□ LOMPOC OFFICE  
115 Civic Center Plaza  
Lompoc, CA 93436  
(805) 737-7760  
Fax: (805) 737-7732

After the calls were discovered, Judge Brian Hill issued two criminal protective orders prohibiting defendant from contacting the victim. Still the defendant violated Judge Hill's orders 73 times by using other inmates' identification numbers and three-way calling facilitated by his mother to avoid detection by law enforcement.

The prosecutor in this precedent setting case, Von Nguyen, stated, "Today's sentence is an important reminder that teenage prosecution is not a victimless crime. In fact, the trauma suffered by victims of human trafficking is immeasurable."

District Attorney Dudley went on to state, "We, as a community, need to be aware that human trafficking can and does occur here in Santa Barbara County. If you know or suspect anyone of being a victim of human trafficking, please call 911 immediately."

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