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Three Arrested in Alleged Tootsys Prostitution and Alien Harboring Conspiracy on St. Thomas

A federal complaint alleges the defendants used Tootsys Gentlemen's Club, a St. Thomas rental house, and a fee structure that pushed dancers into commercial sex, while also recruiting U.S. citizens and financing smuggling operations for aliens.

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An image displayed on Tootsys Gentlemen's Club website shows a dancer performing on stage, as federal prosecutors allege the St. Thomas establishment was used as the center of a prostitution and alien harboring conspiracy.

Federal authorities have arrested three people in St. Thomas accused of operating Tootsys Gentlemen's Club as a prostitution ring and harboring illegal aliens for financial gain, according

to a criminal complaint unsealed Friday.

The complaint alleges that the operation centered on the strip club, a rental house where most of the dancers lived, and a system in which women were recruited, transported, managed, and pressured into commercial sex through what prosecutors describe as a coercive fee structure.

Assistant Attorney General A. Tysen Duva of the Justice Department's Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Adam Sleeper said a federal judge in the District of the Virgin Islands issued the complaint and authorized arrest warrants for Hussein Jamil, also known as Hussian Jamil Suarez and "Tony," 56, of St. Thomas; Magda Castro Santos, also known as "Tatiana," 39, of St. Thomas; and Julio Hidalgo De Pena, 65, of St. Thomas. The three are accused of playing different roles in what the complaint describes as a range of criminal activity tied to Tootsys.

According to court documents, Jamil owns and operates Tootsys, which prosecutors say he, Castro Santos, and Hidalgo De Pena ran as a brothel. The complaint alleges that the club was advertised on Instagram and other platforms to recruit women to work there, and that both U.S. citizens and illegal aliens were hired as dancers and sex workers. Jamil is accused of paying for U.S. citizens to fly from elsewhere in the United States to St. Thomas and of financing smuggling operations to bring aliens illegally into the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The complaint further alleges that most of the dancers working at Tootsys lived in a house on St. Thomas rented by Jamil. Prosecutors say Hidalgo De Pena transported the dancers between that house and the club for their shifts, while Castro Santos managed the dancers at Tootsys by making sure they paid required fees, directing clients to them, and collecting payments for private dances and commercial sex, among other managerial acts. When dancers arrived in St. Thomas to work at the club, prosecutors allege that the fee structure imposed by the defendants pushed them to make more money through commercial sex, both at Tootsys and through customers "buying out" dancers to take them to an offsite premises.

All three defendants are charged with conspiracy to transport for purpose of prostitution, conspiracy to commit interstate and foreign travel or transportation in aid of racketeering enterprises, and conspiracy to harbor aliens for financial gain. If convicted, each faces up to five years in prison on the prostitution and racketeering-related conspiracy counts and up to 10 years in prison on the conspiracy to harbor aliens for financial gain count.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Natasha Baker and Cherrisse Woods of the District of the Virgin Islands, along with Trial Attorneys Jessica Arco and Clayton O'Connor of the Criminal Division's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and Homeland Security Investigations are investigating the matter.

The release says the investigation and charges are supported and prosecuted by JTFA, the Justice Department's lead effort against high-impact human smuggling and trafficking committed by cartels and transnational criminal organizations. The department described JTFA as a partnership between the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security focused on investigating and prosecuting human smuggling, human trafficking, and related immigration crimes that affect public safety and border security.

According to the release, the task force targets leaders and organizers of cartels and transnational criminal organizations involved in human smuggling and trafficking throughout the Americas. The department said the Attorney General has expanded JTFA's work to target groups operating not only in Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras,

but also in Canada, the Caribbean, the maritime border, and elsewhere.

JTFA is led by the Criminal Division's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section and supported by the Money Laundering, Narcotics and Forfeiture Section, the Office of International Affairs, and the Office of Enforcement Operations, among others. It includes dedicated Assistant U.S. Attorney detailees from the Southern District of California, the District of Arizona, the District of New Mexico, the Western and Southern Districts of Texas, the Southern District of Florida, the Northern District of New York, and the District of Vermont.

The release also says the task force works with U.S. Attorney's Offices around the country and supports high-priority cases in any district, relying on law enforcement resources from DHS, including ICE-HSI and CBP, Border Patrol and OFO, as well as the FBI and other agencies. To date, the department said, JTFA's work has led to more than 455 domestic and international arrests of leaders, organizers, and major facilitators of alien smuggling or trafficking, more than 400 U.S. convictions, more than 350 significant jail sentences, and forfeitures of substantial assets.

The arrests are also part of the Homeland Security Task Force initiative established by Executive Order 14159, Protecting the American People Against Invasion, according to the release. The department described HSTF as a whole-of-government partnership aimed at eliminating criminal cartels, foreign gangs, transnational criminal organizations, and human smuggling and trafficking rings operating in the United States and abroad. The initiative places particular emphasis on child trafficking and other crimes involving children and, according to the release, uses all available tools to prosecute and remove the most violent criminal aliens from the United States.