



Maricopa County Attorney

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News Release

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55 Indicted in Massive Prostitution Ring *Lucrative Call Girl Operation Made \$250,000 a Month*

County Attorney Andrew Thomas announced today that more than 50 people have been charged in a 17-count indictment involving a major prostitution ring in the Valley. According to records obtained through a joint investigation by the Phoenix Police Department and the County Attorney's Office, defendant Paul Nichta allegedly led a criminal enterprise that made bank deposits of \$250,000 a month. Nichta allegedly used a series of escort service businesses as a front for prostitution. Those businesses include:

- Desert Divas LLC
- Night Partners Entertainment
- NPE Management Services
- Hips Touring LLC
- Escorts in Action
- AZ Confidential
- Desert Divas New Mexico

According to the probable cause statement filed by Phoenix Police, most of the companies were registered with the City of Phoenix or the Arizona Corporation Commission. The operation was based in midtown Phoenix and also included a pornographic website which showed "Escort Reviews."

Once a week Nichta would hold so called "meet and greets" at Valley restaurants so that prospective customers could meet the escorts in person.

The probable cause statement goes on to say the escorts were recruited by Nichta through ads in the *New Times* and websites promising escorts incomes of up to \$30,000 a month. Two former escorts told police they made about \$2,000 a night but could also earn an additional \$15,000 a night in tips.

Phoenix Police, working on a tip received by Scottsdale Police, started the investigation about a year ago in cooperation with the County Attorney's Office. The investigation included financial records, computer records and interviews with former escorts.

On July 24, 2008, a Maricopa County grand jury handed up a 17-count indictment naming 55 defendants. On August 4 and 5, 2008, Phoenix police began making a series of arrests.

The charges in the indictment include:

- Illegal Control of an Enterprise, a class three felony
- Conspiracy to Commit Illegal Control of an Enterprise, a class three felony
- Illegal Participation in an Enterprise, a class three felony
- Money Laundering, a class two felony
- Money Laundering, a class three felony
- Operating or Maintaining a Prostitution Enterprise, a class five felony
- Pandering, a class five felony
- Receiving the Earnings of a Prostitute, a class five felony
- Prostitution, a class one misdemeanor
- Employment in prostitution, a class one misdemeanor
- Use of Wire or Electronic Communication in Drug Related Transactions, a class four felony

Veteran Deputy County Attorney Laura M. Reckart is prosecuting the case.

Thomas stated, "Our office will work to protect the citizens and neighborhoods of this county from criminal exploitation. We appreciate the excellent work of the Phoenix police detectives who investigated these offenses."

Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon stated, "These are not victimless crimes. On the most basic level, those involved in prostitution, and the family members who love them, are neglected or worse. And the money generated from these illegal ventures helps fund other criminal enterprises such as drug and smuggling operations. This is a good use of resources and I thank the County Attorney and the Phoenix Police Department for working together to make this a better community."

Phoenix Police Chief Jack Harris stated, "I would like to commend the men and women of the Vice Enforcement Unit of the Phoenix Police Department, as well as the other agencies that have assisted us, for the many hours they have spent and will spend during the course of this investigation. This investigation successfully targeted a large scale, sophisticated organization dealing in prostitution and pornography, which are often referred to as "victimless crimes". However, our experience has shown us that these crimes have far reaching consequences on our community. That is why the Phoenix Police Department is committed to fighting these types of crimes."

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