



Department of Justice

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FORMER WRESTLER FOUND GUILTY BY FEDERAL JURY ON FEDERAL SEX TRAFFICKING AND FORCED LABOR CHARGES

ATLANTA, GA--A federal jury returned guilty verdicts today against former professional wrestler HARRISON NORRIS, Jr., 41, a/k/a "Hardbody Harrison," from Cartersville, Georgia, on multiple charges of sex trafficking and forced labor related to a scheme to force women into prostitution.

"This jury has vindicated the rights of the numerous young women this defendant exploited, abused, and forced into prostitution. The Department of Justice will continue to prosecute vigorously matters, such as this one, involving the sexual exploitation of young women," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Rena J. Comisac.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said, "The evidence at trial clearly proved that Norris used force and threats of force against the victims forcing them to work as prostitutes against their will. Sex trafficking and other forced labor are forms of modern day slavery and cannot be tolerated."

According to Nahmias and the information presented in court: NORRIS kidnapped some of his victims and lured others to come live with him by promising to train them as professional wrestlers. Once he got the women to his home, however, he instead forced them to work for him as prostitutes. The witnesses at trial described beatings NORRIS administered and threats he made to bend the women to his will. On one occasion, NORRIS head-butted a woman and threatened to throw her through a hotel window when she would not engage in sex with two customers.

Witnesses also testified that NORRIS imposed a strict military structure in his home. The defendant assigned each of his victims to a “squad” overseen by an “enforcer,” a woman conspiring with NORRIS to keep the victims in servitude. According to testimony, NORRIS referred to himself as “the General”; sometimes made his victims sleep with him in “the General's Quarters”; and pierced the victims’ skin with a mark of their “rank” in the operation. Numerous witnesses also testified about parties at which the women were forced to have sex with numerous men and sometimes with other women. One woman testified that NORRIS forced her to sexually assault another woman during one of these parties. Evidence at trial established that forced acts of prostitution occurred at nightclubs, in apartments, at hotels, in the back of NORRIS’ truck, and in other areas of North Carolina and Northern Georgia. The victims also testified that they were forced to have sex with NORRIS.

In addition to forcing the victims to work as prostitutes, NORRIS made the women work in and around his two homes in Cartersville. Witnesses testified that Norris required the victims to haul trees, lay sod, and paint. The evidence at trial further established that NORRIS set strict rules and fined the women for such infractions as talking too much or failing to exercise. In addition, he kept the women financially indebted to him by charging them for food, medicine, and cigarettes. NORRIS then told the victims that they could not leave until their debts were paid, all the while continuing to increase the debt he claimed he was owed.

The jury convicted NORRIS on 24 counts after approximately one day of deliberation. NORRIS was found not guilty on four counts involving one victim. In rendering its verdict, the jury specifically found that NORRIS’ offenses involved aggravated sexual abuse. Because of this special finding, Norris faces a maximum sentence of life in prison. In addition, the jury found that his luxury SUV was used to facilitate commissions of the crimes and, therefore, shall be forfeited. NORRIS faces a maximum of life in federal prison. Sentencing is set for February 28, 2008, at 10:00 a.m., before United States District Judge Jack T. Camp.

Human trafficking prosecutions such as this one are a top priority of the Department of Justice. In the last seven fiscal years, the Civil Rights Division, in conjunction with the U.S. Attorneys’ Offices, has increased by nearly seven-fold the number of human trafficking cases filed in court as compared to the previous seven fiscal years. In FY 2007, the Department obtained a record number of convictions in human trafficking prosecutions.

This case was investigated by special agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and officers of the Atlanta Police Department, Human Trafficking Task Force. Assistance in this case was provided by the Smyrna (Georgia) Police Department and the Bartow County Sheriff’s Office.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Susan Coppedge and Department of Justice Civil Rights Attorney Karima Maloney are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney or Executive Assistant United States Attorney Charysse L. Alexander, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.