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PRESS RELEASE

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MINNEAPOLIS MAN FOUND GUILTY OF SOLICITATION AND PROMOTION OF PROSTITUTION, SEX TRAFFICKING, AND POSSESSION OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES

REDWOOD FALLS, MN --- A Redwood County jury found Morries Lester Hall, 45, of Minneapolis, guilty of one count of Solicitation of an Individual for Prostitution, one count of Sex Trafficking in the Second Degree, one count of Promotion of an Individual for Prostitution, three counts of Possession of Controlled Substances in the Fifth Degree, and one count of Possession of Drug Paraphernalia. The jury deliberated for approximately one hour on February 23, 2024, before delivering the guilty verdicts around 6:00 p.m.

According to the criminal complaint, evidence discovered during the investigation, and testimony provided at trial, on October 16, 2019, at approximately 9:30 a.m. Lower Sioux Tribal Police Officers located Hall and two other individuals in the parking lot of the Oyate C-Store. For approximately one hour, the vehicle, a black Crown Victoria, and its occupants remained inside the vehicle while the driver, later identified as Hall, occasionally exited the vehicle and walked around it. After approximately an hour of observation, officers approached the vehicle to verify everything was ok. Hall indicated they were fine, but were fixing a flat tire. Officers did not observe a flat tire at the time.

At approximately 1:15 p.m. officers spoke with Oyate C-Store employees who stated the occupants of the black Crown Victoria threw a small tinfoil wrapper out of the vehicle about an hour earlier. Officers then located the vehicle in the Jackpot Junction main parking lot, occupied by the same three individuals. Officers approached the vehicle and requested identification from the occupant sitting in the driver seat. The female stated she didn't have a license and gave officers a name and a date of birth. She later admitted to officers she gave a false name and date of birth. The backseat passenger was identified as Eric James Ruter (DOB 02/04/1969). The third occupant was identified as Hall and the owner of the vehicle.

After receiving consent to search the vehicle, officers located hypodermic needles, one of which contained “residue” which later tested positive for methamphetamine, cocaine, and fentanyl, a glass pipe containing residue which later tested positive for methamphetamine in the pocket of a pair of men’s sweatpants located in the backseat of the car, and a cigarette box in the rear window of the vehicle. Inside the cigarette box was a tic-tac container with three different baggies containing white powder-like substances. The substances later tested positive for methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, fentanyl, tramadol, and 4-anilino-N-phenethylpiperidine. The female admitted the needle belonged to her on scene. No one claimed possession of the pipe or the tic-tac container containing controlled substances on scene.

All three individuals were taken into custody and transported to the Redwood County Jail. During a search of Hall’s person, officers also located \$2,295 in cash. Hall was read his Miranda Warning and agreed to speak with officers. While speaking with officers, Hall admitted the sweatpants, the glass pipe and all the other narcotics located in the vehicle belonged to him. Hall also admitted he located the female “on the streets” on October 15, 2019 and approached her on behalf of Ruter for the purpose of arranging sexual intercourse between her and Ruter, who was waiting in his black Crown Victoria, for money. While speaking with the officers, the female confirmed she came to the casino with Hall and Ruter to engage in sex for money with Ruter. She confirmed Hall approached her on Lake Street in Minneapolis and introduced her to Ruter. They agreed she would receive \$60 in exchange for having sex with Mr. Ruter at the hotel attached to the casino.

Peterson, Redwood County Attorney, who prosecuted the case, told the jury in her closing argument, “This trial is about Hall and what he did. It’s about Hall approaching a female stranger walking alone on Lake Street in Minneapolis, about him soliciting her to engage in sex for money with his friend, about him inducing her to get in his car, transporting her in his car from Lake Street to Jackpot Junction Casino for the purpose of “getting his part done and passing the torch” to his friend, Mr. Ruter, so he could “get busy”. That’s what this case is about. It does not matter if she’s done this before. It does not matter why she does it. It does not matter that no sex actually occurred. It does not matter that she consented to the offer by Hall. Consent is not a defense for Hall’s actions”

Hall will be sentenced on April 8, 2024, at the Redwood County Courthouse.

If you or someone you know is a victim of sex trafficking, please reach out to local law enforcement or the National Human Trafficking Hotline is also available 24/7 for confidential assistance at 1-888-373-7888 or on their website <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/get-help>.