



PRESS RELEASE
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Large Scale Human Traffickers Arrested in Joint Operation by San Ramon Police and the F.B.I. Contra Costa County Safe Streets Task Force

Danville (Ca)- In an investigation going back to 2001, the San Ramon Police Department, in a joint operation with the Contra Costa County District Attorney's Office, and the F.B.I. Safe Streets Task Force, arrested three suspects in a large scale human trafficking operation. Suspect James Joseph Jr. and his common law wife Avisa Lavassani led a sex trafficking ring for the last 14 years, which had been centered in San Ramon and Danville, CA.

Both Joseph and Lavassani are currently in custody awaiting arraignment on Human Trafficking and Conspiracy to Commit Human Trafficking charges. Suspect Anthony Reynolds, who assisted Joseph and Lavassani in their trafficking operations, also awaits arraignment in custody.

Acting on information obtained through prior victims of James Joseph Jr. and Avisa Lavassani, the San Ramon Police Department began an investigation into the current activities of the two trafficking ring heads. Utilizing a months-long wire-tap as well as field surveillance, the San Ramon Police Department, Investigators with the F.B.I. Safe Streets Task Force and District Attorney Investigators uncovered a wide-ranging human trafficking operation that stretched from California to Cleveland, to Miami, and to New York. The operation was netting Joseph Jr. and Lavassani tens of thousands of dollars a week utilizing multiple trafficking victims at one time.

Chief Joe Gorton of the San Ramon Police Department stated: "This investigation has shown us that human trafficking does not stay within jurisdictional lines and it doesn't just happen in big cities or at ports and truck stops. Human trafficking can occur anywhere and it can be hidden in plain sight."

Contra Costa County District Attorney Mark Peterson declared: “We are committed to investigate and prosecute human traffickers in Contra Costa County. There is no room in our society for treating human beings as slaves and property that can be bought and sold. The San Ramon Police Department and the F.B.I. Safe Streets Task Force did an outstanding job in working this complex and highly involved case.”

The FBI Contra Costa County Safe Streets Task Force consists of police officers and investigators from the F.B.I., Antioch Police Department, Contra Costa County Sheriff’s Department, Richmond Police Department, Contra Costa County Probation Department, California Department of Corrections, Pittsburg Police Department, and the San Ramon Police Department. Along with law enforcement officials, the District Attorney’s Office also utilized several Victim/Witness Advocates, representative who work exclusively with victims and witnesses of violent crime, in their investigation.