

SAPD compiling lists of Internet sex clients

By Anita McDivitt Express-News Staff Writer December 7, 1996 Publication: San Antonio Express-News Page: 1A Word Count: 666

Police made a sixth arrest Friday and were putting together lists of clients after breaking up an alleged San Antonio-based, statewide male prostitution ring that advertised on the Internet. Ronny Rendon, 21, of the 1200 block of Mulberry Street was charged with organized crime - aggravated promotion of prostitution Friday and was being held in Bexar County Jail in lieu of posting \$150,000 bond.

With Rendon's arrest and the seizure of the escort service's files in San Antonio, Houston and Dallas, police began compiling lists of men who apparently solicited male "companions" via the Internet and by calling several toll-free phone numbers. Rendon was arrested about 10:45 a.m. Friday on his way to class at San Antonio College. He was the second San Antonio man arrested since Thursday, when police shut down Nitelife USA, the Internet home page of the alleged prostitution business. A home page is the Internet address on the computerized World Wide Web for an individual, group or company. Police still are looking for two men in connection with the alleged ring and have issued warrants for their arrests. The suspected founder and mastermind of the escort business - 67-year-old William Bloss - was arrested Thursday afternoon at his Northeast Side home without incident. Bloss and four others in Austin, Dallas and Houston were charged with organized crime - aggravated promotion of prostitution. Police seized four computers, phone switches, postage metering and several boxes of files from Bloss' house. The Police Department's Covert Operations Unit began investigating Bloss about eight months ago after receiving a phone tip alerting it to the existence of an alleged prostitution ring targeting gay men. Smittick said detectives discovered the ring advertising in local and statewide gay publications, mostly magazines and alternative

newspapers that may be bought at news stands or by private subscription. The ads featured up to four different toll-free numbers, some of which led back to Bloss' home. It was unclear Friday if the printed ads featured the Internet address of Nitelife USA. At least 60 adult male prostitutes allegedly were dispatched from four locations - San Antonio, Austin, Dallas and Houston - to clients who were asked to leave a name, phone number and a hotel room number on an answering machine. Smittick said police still were investigating whether minors were involved in the operation. "What makes this unique is they were male prostitutes and were statewide," Smittick said at a Friday morning news conference. The Express-News Online staff was able to obtain a copy of the Nitelife USA home page as it appeared before it was shut down by police Thursday afternoon. The page offered "city guides and companions for the gay community. That's either to go out on the town or spend a quiet time alone. For specific guide information, click on the city where you will need the guide." The site also offered "licensing agreements," eight hours of "training," and advertising layouts to help "establish clients." It also indicated those who set up a franchise could "turn \$1,000 into a \$40,000 annual business," be "self-employed" and "work from home." The page claims it was established in 1985 in San Antonio. Advertisements for "companions" in the four cities featured descriptions of men, including age, weight, height, eye and hair color, and the presence or absence of body and facial hair. When Dallas police arrested David Manning, 56, at his home Thursday, they also confiscated boxes of business records and photographs of Manning involved in sex acts with young boys. Dallas police said Friday that charges of child pornography were pending against Manning, who lost his medical license 11 years ago when he was convicted of indecency with a child, a felony. In Houston, police arrested two men - Steven Snyder, 32, and James Dinkins, 25 - in their apartments without incident around 12:30 p.m. Thursday. A fifth man, Bradley Peterson, 33, was arrested in Austin. All those arrested have been charged with organized crime (aggravated promotion of prostitution) and are awaiting transfer to Bexar County Jail. - Staff Writer Jaime Castillo and Express-News Online Staffer Lazaro Hernandez contributed to this report.

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