

## Man gets chance to keep felony off his record

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WAILUKU — A man who was among those arrested in a prostitution sting in South Maui last year was ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine and was given a chance to keep a felony drug conviction off his record.

Grant Koga, 35, of Makawao was sentenced March 2 after he pleaded no contest to a reduced charge of third-degree promotion of cocaine, a dangerous drug, and prostitution in connection with his arrest Nov. 4.

Another charge of third-degree promotion of a dangerous drug for methamphetamine and a charge of possessing drug paraphernalia were dismissed in exchange for his pleas.

As part of the plea agreement, the prosecution didn't oppose Koga's request for a chance to keep the drug conviction off his record.

Koga has no prior criminal record and is a college graduate who has worked at the same job for the past nine years, said his attorney, Chris Dunn.

He said Koga committed the offense during a "lapse of judgment" after the end of a longterm relationship.

"His criminal behavior is born particularly from that sad and depressed place that he was in," Dunn said.

Since then, Koga has been in therapy, Dunn said.

Deputy Prosecutor Tracy Jones said the prosecution has a different view of the prostitution case.

"He sees it as a way of seeking comfort from a sad place in a rough time," she said. "The state sees it as gender-based violence. We see the commercial sex industry as a problem fueled by buyers demanding a supply."

She noted that the "vast majority" of buyers globally are men.

"It's a man purchasing a woman for sex," Jones said.

"It's wrong. We see that this sexual exploitation is occurring here in our small community."

Police reported that a female police officer posed as a prostitute in the sting operation at a hotel.

Jones said the sting was set up "to target buyers as a way to shut the business."

"If there's no buyers, there's no business," she said. "Even in a small community like Maui, it's here. It's a negative for us in our community and it's dangerous to women."

Second Circuit Judge Kelsey Kawano followed the plea agreement in sentencing Koga, who could have his record cleared if he follows court requirements for the next four years.

He was ordered not to consume alcohol or illegal drugs and to continue in counseling until he's clinically discharged.

Contraband and cash seized in the investigation were ordered forfeited to the state.

Court records show 11 other men arrested in the operation in November were sentenced in Wailuku District Court in December and January to fines of \$500 each after pleading no contest to prostitution. Jail terms were suspended for the men on the condition that they have no similar convictions in six months.

The sentences were ordered for Michael James Medeiros, 47; Kevin Sean Keoni Galiciano, 44, of Kahului; Myron Daniels, 32, of Kihei; Bradley S. Forrer, 54, of Napili; Ryan Gaoiran, 35, of Kahului; David Leroy Flood, 53, of Corona, Calif.; Bendel Caesar Sambano Garcia, 23, of Waikapu; Robert Schmaltz, 67, of Kihei; Samuel Cachola, 48, of Kihei; and Antone Estrella, 36, of Waiehu.

According to court records, prostitution charges are pending against Stacy Otomo, 64, of Wailuku and Kurt Yamamura, 41.