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Motel Operators and Owners Sanctioned for Allowing Sex Trafficking

Owners agree to change management, pay fines, and stop prostitution on site

San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott announced today that a San Diego motel that has long been a hub for sex trafficking has agreed to stop allowing prostitution and other illegal activities on the property.

The Main Street Motel located at 3494 Main St., in Barrio Logan near Naval Base San Diego, is the subject of an enforcement action taken by the City Attorney's Nuisance Abatement Unit. The unit has been working with the motel owners and operators for more than eight months to reach a stipulated agreement, which was signed by a Superior Court judge this month.

A civil complaint filed by the City Attorney against the owner and operators of the motel details at least four years of law enforcement activity at the site. From January 2019 to February 2023, San Diego Police Department responded to 229 calls for service in response to reports of prostitution, loitering, fights, and drug overdoses, and made about 32 prostitution-related arrests.

Police also received numerous complaints of women flagging down cars near the motel at all hours. Many times, the women, when contacted by police, had motel room keys in their possession.

“This agreement should put an end to the sordid history of human trafficking and exploitation taking place in a neighborhood of families and small businesses,” City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. **“My Office does not back down when it comes to protecting the victims of sex trafficking or improving the quality of life for the surrounding community.”**

“The San Diego Police Department is committed to holding human traffickers accountable and helping the survivors of this horrible crime,” said Lt. Jason Scott of the San Diego Police Department's Vice unit, which assisted the City Attorney's Office in the case. **“We are proud to be partners in abating this nuisance property.”**

Recent City media releases can be accessed on the San Diego City Attorney's website: <https://www.sandiego.gov/cityattorney>
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When police contacted one of the motel's operators about the ongoing prostitution activity in August 2021 and requested the nuisance be abated, he told officers that he could not prevent criminal activity on the premises because he had no control over the motel guests or visitors.

To settle the case, the motel owners agreed to implement 36 separate compliance measures as conditions for staying in business. The agreement requires that the motel owners terminate the current motel operator's lease, hire uniformed security guards, install security cameras, and provide remote access to the cameras to the San Diego Police Department 24 hours a day, upon request. The motel owners must also stop renting rooms by the hour, install a new electronic key card system that monitors guests' entry and departure, require guests to check in with a photo ID, and post large signs visible from the street stating that trespassing, loitering, prostitution, drugs, and weapons are prohibited on the property, and all illegal activity will be reported to the police. If the prostitution activity or human trafficking continues the owners may also have to close the motel for one year.

The hotel owners and operators must also pay \$25,000 to the San Diego Police Department to reimburse the City for investigative costs, and pay a combined \$50,000 in civil penalties, with \$325,000 in penalties stayed pending compliance with the injunction and stipulated judgment terms. The injunction prohibits them from allowing prostitution, lewdness, or human trafficking at the property, or maintaining a public nuisance.

The motel is located in an area that was recently the subject of a months-long sex trafficking sting operation involving the San Diego Police Department, National City Police, the City Attorney and District Attorney's offices, and other agencies.

In that operation, announced in late February, 48 people were arrested for sex trafficking, and eight minors who had been forced into sex work were rescued.

The motel's owners – PPNC LLC and its Chief Executive Officer Niruben Pravinkumar Bhakta – were very cooperative during the investigation, and willingly took measures to address the public nuisance identified by police and the City Attorney's Office. The now-former managers – Vini Hospitality LLC, Rahul Natvarlal Arya, and Nisha Rahul Arya – are prohibited from continuing to operate the motel.

Both the owners and operators were also required to make a \$5,500 donation each to a nonprofit organization whose mission includes assisting victims of sex trafficking.

This case was prosecuted by Deputy City Attorney Han H. Hershman of the Nuisance Abatement Unit, under the supervision of Chief Deputy City Attorney Gabriela S. Brannan and Assistant City Attorney Paige E. Folkman.

The Nuisance Abatement Unit is devoted to aggressively enforcing public nuisance, land use, and environmental laws in the City of San Diego. NAU works in partnership with City departments, Council Offices, community groups, and the police to proactively preserve and enhance the quality of life in our communities.

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