

ORANGE COUNTY HUMAN TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE

425 S. Harbor Boulevard, Anaheim, CA 92805

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUBJECT: COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF A MINOR ARRESTS

ANAHEIM, CALIF. (February 2, 2021) – Five men have been charged with the commercial sexual exploitation of a minor in connection with meeting a teenage girl through an online site to have sex with her. The arrests are a result of a four-month investigation by investigators with the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF).

In September 2020, investigators from the OCHTTF initiated an investigation into the possible commercial sexual exploitation of a minor related to the online website, Sugardaddymeet.com. The initial investigation identified other men from the website who had also met with an underage girl for the purposes of commercial sex.

For the past four months, OCHTTF investigators have exhaustively worked to collect evidence for the filing of criminal charges on the identified individuals.

The Orange County District Attorney's Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) unit has filed criminal charges on the following suspects:

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Mitchell Biela, 31-year-old resident of Long Beach, CA is charged with one felony count of human trafficking of a minor, one felony count of pimping a minor for prostitution, and one felony count of pandering a minor.



Michael Araujo, 48-year-old resident of Anaheim, CA is charged with six felony counts of lewd acts upon a child between the age of 14 and 15, six felony counts of oral sex with a minor and 18 misdemeanor counts of soliciting, engaging or agreeing to engage in prostitution with a minor, and one felony count of sodomy of a minor.



Nick Rexford Walpert, 59-year-old resident of San Diego, CA is charged is charged with one felony count of meeting a minor to commit lewd conduct, one felony count of attempted sodomy of a minor, and one felony count of attempted unlawful sexual intercourse, and one felony count of attempted oral copulation of a minor.

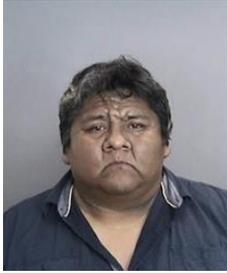


Michael Leija, 40-year-old resident of Norwalk, CA is charged with ten felony counts of lewd acts upon a child between the age of 14 and 15, and one misdemeanor count of solicitation, engaging or agreeing to engage in prostitution with a minor.

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Juan Catalan, 42-year-old resident of Gardena, CA is charged with one felony count of a lewd act on a child between the age of 14 and 15, one felony count of luring a child with criminal intent, one felony count of meeting a minor to commit lewd conduct, two misdemeanor counts of soliciting, engaging or agreeing to engage in prostitution with a minor and one misdemeanor count of arranging to meet a minor for lewd conduct.

“No matter how many ways predators continue to try to disguise their sexual abuse of children, the Orange County District Attorney’s Office and our law enforcement partners will never stop protecting these vulnerable victims. Working together we will continue to outsmart those who prey on innocent children, arrest them, and prosecute them. No child should have to suffer sexual abuse and we will hold these monsters accountable.”

The Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force’s top priority is the protection of minors against commercial sexual exploitation. This effort continues to become more difficult due to the abundant number of dating and other social media sites. Some of these sites are openly used to advertise sex for money while others become unwitting participants when their sites are hijacked or misused by child predators.

The fact remains, countless number of minors continue to be sexually exploited online. One of the draws by sexual predators to online sites is the benefit of anonymity. Anyone can portray themselves to be someone they are not. Unfortunately, this trend continues to increase at an exponential rate, increasing the number of minors being exploited.

Anaheim Police Chief Jorge Cisneros stated, “The benefit of anonymity also works in law enforcement’s favor. Let those looking to sexually exploit children, or any victim be warned. We are investigating these crimes and will bring you to justice, which these suspects now know, firsthand.”

It is important to note that once found, these perpetrators are being charged with solicitation of a minor in addition to felony sex charges.

Deputy District Attorney Kelcie Wiemann of the Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) unit is prosecuting these cases.
