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# FBI

## Law Enforcement Bulletin

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# ***Escort Services A Front For Prostitution***

***"Crimes of theft, drug abuse, robbery, and assault and battery are frequent byproducts of an organized prostitution service."***

By  
LT. MICHAEL E. BIGGS  
*Police Department  
Huntington Beach, CA*

The oldest profession has long posed a serious problem to law enforcement. By its very nature, prostitution presents obstacles to its eradication. Prostitutes are transitory and operate under several guises, ranging from street walkers to those engaged in clandestine operations, such as modeling studios and massage parlors. However, the prostitution activity that is most difficult to prosecute is the escort service.

## **The Problem**

Legitimate escort services provide the customer with a companion for social events rather than sex. However, there are escort services which operate under the guise of offering legal companionship, but in reality, are designed to provide for the sexual gratification of its customers.

The criminal activities associated with illegal escort services reach far beyond sexual acts. Crimes of theft, drug abuse, robbery, and assault and battery are frequent byproducts of an organized prostitution service. In addition, the public health can be affected through the spread of communicable diseases.

An illegal escort service designed as a front for a prostitution ring generally operates in the following manner. The operator of the service advertises in various publications, ranging from newspaper classified ads to telephone directories. These advertisements run simultaneously using different phone numbers, usually offering the company of women to men with money. For example, "Classy lady seeks generous gents 40 and over for fun. Julie 555-5310"; "Shapely foxy redhead seeks

wealthy men for dates 555-4805"; or "Two sexy blonds would love to model in your home, generous, over 40 only 555-4779." These phone numbers will generally be assigned to fictitious names and have call forwarding capabilities to a central location, which is most commonly the residence, vehicle, or business office of the operator. In an office, the operator maintains the business records and equipment needed to operate the service on a day-to-day basis.

The records might include the applications and contracts of the escorts which show their physical descriptions, addresses, phone numbers, and photographs. In some cases, these documents contain detailed descriptions of what sexual acts they will not perform, what costumes or roles they will adopt while entertaining a customer, and the



Lieutenant Bliggs



Chief G. L. Payne

rules and procedures regarding how the service operates, including fees charged, length of sessions, payoffs to the service operator, hours worked by the escort, and the reliability of each escort in responding to calls and ensuring customer satisfaction.

The operator's records will also contain information relating to the financial aspects of the business. Most commonly, this will be in the form of lists showing money due from escorts, the names of customers who have written bad checks, credit card procedures and imprints, advertising expenses, and money paid to escorts. It is not uncommon for escort services to have multiple bank accounts which will show sizeable deposits on a rotating basis.

The last major category of records often found in an escort service's office relates to customer service. Such records include customer names and identifying information, sexual preferences, physical likes and dislikes, records of incoming calls and services rendered, names of prank callers, undercover vice officers' names and descriptions, locations of previous arrests, and phone numbers used by undercover officers.

The owner/operator of an escort service is shielded from discovery and arrest by several protective barriers designed to provide high-profit margins from the illegal act of prostitution and minimal exposure to investigating officers. To accomplish this, the operator will hire established prostitutes, those referred by other escort services, or by advertising for escorts in the classified sections of local newspapers. On many occasions, the operator will conduct interviews by phone to obtain descrip-

tions and background information, thereby protecting his or her identity. The operator will also explain that the escort service will merely arrange legitimate dates and that the escort is not to do anything illegal. This way, the service operator is able to claim that a legitimate escort service was being operated and that he or she had no knowledge of any illegal sexual activity taking place.

Advertising for the escort service is placed in telephone directories, adult publications, and personal classified ad sections of local newspapers. Customers call in response to the advertisements and give personal information to the operator, including name, address, home phone, occupation, business address, phone number, driver's license number, credit card numbers, the location of the call, and physical description. The operator also determines how much time the customer wants to spend with the escort and how the customer was referred to the service before telling the customer that someone will call back soon.

Next, the operator tries to verify the identity of the prospective customer by checking the information given against the "John" or customer file, prank file, and undercover police officer file. The operator will also check listed phone information to see if the name is valid. In some instances, operators will call other escort service operators to see if the customer has used such services in the past. Large escort services sometimes use personal computers to manage these recordkeeping functions.

Once the operator has verified the information, a phone call is placed to a

**“The owner/operator of an escort service is shielded from discovery and arrest by several protective barriers designed to provide high-profit margins . . . and minimal exposure to investigating officers.”**

prostitute, relaying the necessary information. The prostitute will call the customer, describe herself, and explain the fee schedule and how it must be paid. Prices vary, but generally run \$30 as a service fee and \$50 for a one-half hour session and \$100 for a full hour. Higher prices are charged for longer periods of time. The prostitute tells the customer that these fees are for her time and companionship. It is only on rare occasion that sexual acts are discussed at this point. If the prostitute feels comfortable with the customer, she asks for directions to the meeting place and gives an estimated time of arrival.

Upon arriving, the prostitute checks the location for signs of police presence. She then verifies the customer's identification, and if convinced the customer is not an undercover po-

lice officer, collects the escort service fee and her fee. This is usually done in cash; however, large services will accept credit cards and personal checks from regular customers. As soon as the money is collected, the prostitute calls the escort service operator to say that all is going well.

Once the call ends, the prostitute asks the customer what services he desires. The termination of the call also signals the service operator to begin monitoring the time the prostitute spends with the customer. Previous agreements between the operator and the escort requires that she phone the operator again, after she is finished with the customer. This serves to notify the operator that the escort experienced no problems and that she is available for another call.

If the operator does not receive the second call, it can be assumed one of three things has happened. First, the customer was an undercover police officer and the escort has been arrested for prostitution; second, the customer has prevented the escort from leaving and is detaining her against her will; or third, the escort has fled with the service fee and the money she made on the call.

If the service is large enough to employ a security force, they will be asked to look into the problem; otherwise, the service operator investigates. Whoever does the checking will almost always call the location and ask for the escort or customer by name. If this does not resolve the problem, a call will be placed to the police reporting a serious disturbance requiring assistance.

*This record sheet shows the number of calls 15 escorts went on during a 1-week period.*

|    | M  | T  | W  | Th | Fri | Sat | Sun | Total |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| 1  | 4  | 7  | 8  | 1  | 10  | 7   | 4   | 41    |
| 2  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 6  | 9   | 10  | 8   | 41    |
| 3  | 4  | 3  | 2  | 4  | 13  | 10  | 11  | 47    |
| 4  | 7  | 7  | 6  | 3  | 12  | 3   | 6   | 45    |
| 5  | 7  | 5  | 3  | 4  | 5   | 3   | 3   | 30    |
| 6  | 3  | 6  | 4  | 1  | 6   | 4   | 6   | 30    |
| 7  | 10 | 2  | 6  | 3  | 5   | 12  | 12  | 40    |
| 8  | 6  | 5  | 5  | 11 | 6   | 2   | 4   | 40    |
| 9  | 7  | 9  | 2  | 9  | 10  | 12  | 13  | 60    |
| 10 | 2  | 10 | 6  | 8  | 9   | 7   | 2   | 42    |
| 11 | 5  | 7  | 8  | 7  | 6   | 6   | 7   | 46    |
| 12 | 7  | 4  | 12 | 13 | 6   | 1   | 2   | 41    |
| 13 | 1  | 15 | 9  | 11 | 4   | 15  | 4   | 51    |
| 14 | 5  | 8  | 11 | 9  | 8   | 10  | 8   | 60    |
| 15 | 12 | 18 | 26 | 21 | 34  | 11  | 18  | 140   |

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***“The two most common methods of investigating illegal escort services are using undercover police officers to pose as customers and developing escort service employees as informants.”***

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If the prostitute has been arrested, the escort service will receive a call from her during the booking process. This will certainly alert the operator to the fact that the name, address, and phone number used by the client are in actuality a part of an undercover police operation. If the customer is holding the escort against her will, calling the room or sending the police to the location will almost always rectify the situation and free the prostitute. If the escort has fled with the money, the operator will limit the prostitute's future work prospects by notifying other area escort services that she is unreliable.

In Orange County, CA, there are over 50 escort-related published advertisements in the phone directories and in excess of 20 escort-related advertisements in the personal classified ad section of a local daily newspaper. The records seized during the investigation of some escort services reveal that the number of prostitutes working for each service ranges from 1 to 30. The financial records of two escort services, each employing 12 to 15 prostitutes, showed that each grossed in excess of \$250,000 annually. The overhead of operating these services is minimal, leaving the operator a high-profit margin.

#### **Possible Solutions**

To prosecute an illegal escort service successfully, investigators must always seize the business records kept by the operator. The goal of these investigations should be to develop enough information to allow the investigating agency access to the escort service's operating location and records. This is usually done by gathering

sufficient information to show probable cause that such an illegal operation exists and by obtaining and serving a search warrant. The specific tactics used by an investigating agency to obtain a search warrant depend on the size, type, and operating area of the illegal escort service, as well as how the operation of the service was brought to the attention of the police.

Most escort services are discovered through open sources of information, such as phone directories, newspaper personal advertisements, or publications catering to adult entertainment. Less frequent are cases where employees of the service or customers inform the police about the service. The two most common methods of investigating illegal escort services are using undercover police officers to pose as customers and developing escort service employees as informants.

#### **Undercover Investigations**

To conduct effectively an undercover investigation into illegal escort services, police officers posing as customers must be equipped with identification that will satisfy the scrutiny of the escort service. Identification should include such items as a driver's license, credit cards, business identification, business cards and references, a checking account, airline tickets, and vehicle registration. The name and address used by the undercover operator may need to be published in a telephone directory.

The location chosen for the undercover operation is very important, the most common being a hotel or motel. However, because these locations are

often used for undercover investigations, many illegal services will not send escorts to customers calling from a hotel or motel. If a residence, such as a private home or apartment, is used, the undercover operator must insure that his false identification matches the address of the operation. Most illegal escort service operators realize the difficulty in obtaining extensive credentials bearing false addresses. Another important consideration is to have the utility bills for the address in question bear the fictitious name of the undercover operator.

A site selected for an undercover operation should be thoroughly checked for compatibility with the equipment that will be used. Some transmitters will not work in concrete or metal buildings. It is also important to ensure that the devices are positioned where a signal can be transmitted.

The location should also allow for good concealment and easy access for backup surveillance officers. It is recommended that some officers be as close as possible to the undercover operator, as well as having some officers located outside the building. For example, if the undercover operation is being run from a hotel or motel, apartment, or business office, one team of backup officers should be in an adjacent room or no farther than across the hall and a second team should be outside in a mobile post. When a private home is used, one team should be concealed on the premises and a second team outside in a mobile post. Both teams should be equipped with monitoring devices that allow them to hear the conversation between the undercover officer and the prostitute. It is also

hotel call. ASK for Betty from O.C. Area.  
 If you ask for one what is the address, the  
 work I.D. Mike checking account (personal)  
 listed in info. at home town. you get last  
 4 digits of ph-#.

If not from O.C. Area get where from  
 is listed in home town or last 4 digits of phone  
 how did you get here if plane ask for  
 ticket ~~with~~ him hunting car - does he have  
 his receipt or work I.D. with him.

If listed call girl give all info &  
 her call of me after she calls him.  
 If everything is O.K. then she'll call me  
 & go see him.

Mike

*Various instructions are left to assist the person  
 who takes calls over the telephone.*

essential that the backup teams be able  
 to communicate with each other at all  
 times. The conversation between the  
 undercover operator and the escort  
 should be recorded whenever possible.

Once the undercover operator  
 phones a service and receives a call  
 back that an escort is on the way, the  
 surveillance teams are responsible for  
 monitoring the events outside and no-  
 tifying the undercover operator of the  
 escort's arrival. They then watch the car  
 she arrives in, along with any compan-  
 ions who may have accompanied her.

Once the escort and undercover  
 operator are alone, it is the operator's  
 responsibility to handle the investiga-  
 tion according to the policies of his  
 agency and within the guidelines set by  
 the prosecuting agency.

When the undercover operator  
 perceives a violation, he notifies the  
 backup teams by a prearranged signal.  
 This is usually something that is said in  
 the course of conversation with the es-  
 cort which is then broadcast by the  
 transmitter, but can actually be any kind  
 of audible signal. If the transmitter is not  
 working, a secondary visual signal  
 should be prearranged to notify the  
 backup teams to enter.

When the undercover operator sig-  
 nals the backup teams to enter, he  
 should position himself so as to keep  
 the escort from reaching her purse,  
 since many escorts carry weapons. The  
 backup team should be responsible for  
 arresting the escort and detaining any  
 of her companions until their involve-  
 ment is determined. It is the undercover

operator's responsibility to prevent the  
 escort from arming herself and for alert-  
 ing the backup team to any weapons or  
 evidence.

Photographs of the escort should  
 be taken if requested by the prosecut-  
 ing agency. Every effort should be  
 made so as not to degrade the escort;  
 if the escort has disrobed, she should  
 be allowed to dress immediately.

Once the scene is secured, the un-  
 dercover operator should collect all  
 available evidence. This might include  
 lists of customers, directions to meeting  
 spots, directions to the undercover ar-  
 rest site, birth control devices, such as  
 condoms or contraceptive sponges,  
 credit card imprinters, and invoices.  
 The undercover operator or his desig-  
 nee should always try to interview the

***“Investigating illegal escort services is time-consuming and often requires smaller agencies to combine resources for effectiveness.”***

escort for information about the escort service operator.

**Informant Operations**

Another method of investigating escort services is to identify prostitutes or other employees who have first-hand knowledge of how the service operates and to use that information to gain access to the business records of the service operator. Once the investigating agency has seized the business records, the final phase of the investigation begins. First, prostitutes working for the service must be identified and interviewed to establish that the service operator knew that the customers he/she sent them to were for the purpose of having sex and that they gave him/her

money obtained from the customers. Second, customers must be identified and interviewed for the purpose of establishing that they arranged for a sexual encounter with an escort by calling the service. Third, if the investigating agency is capable of doing so, it should take over and temporarily operate the service after the business records are seized to corroborate other evidence showing the purpose of the escort service is to arrange sexual liaisons and not legitimate dates

Using undercover police officers to meet customers while posing as escorts will normally establish that the customer was seeking a sexual act. This, in conjunction with the information gained from an examination of the es-

cort service business records, tape recordings of solicitations by escorts, and testimony of prostitutes and customers as to the nature of the escort service and how it operated, will generally meet the burden of proving that the escort service was operating as a prostitution ring.

**Conclusion**

Investigating illegal escort services is time-consuming and often requires smaller agencies to combine resources for effectiveness. However, with hard work and a well-planned investigation, the result can be a successful prosecution.

***Hoax  
Bombing  
Device***

This device was discovered by an employee at the Charleston International Airport in Charleston, SC. While it appears to be an authentic explosive device, it is actually an alarm clock sold commercially as a novelty item. Approximately 10 inches in length overall, the only working part is the small black clock, which is about 3 inches long. Because of its realistic appearance, this clock could easily be used as a “hoax” bombing device.

