



# **UTAH ATTORNEY GENERAL S.E.C.U.R.E STRIKE FORCE**

## **FY 2020 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE UTAH LEGISLATURE**

In 2009, the Utah legislature tasked the Utah Attorney General to “administer and coordinate the operation of a multi-agency strike force to combat violent and other major felony crimes within this state that are associated with illegal immigration and human trafficking.” U.C.A. § 67-5-22.7. Today, a team of elite Special Agent Investigators, highly qualified prosecutors and support staff carry out this mandate in the form of the S.E.C.U.R.E (Statewide Enforcement of Crimes involving Undocumented Residents) Strike Force.

The S.E.C.U.R.E Strike Force partners with many Federal and State law enforcement agencies to ensure the directive of the legislature, including the U.S. Attorney’s Office, U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE/ERO), U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and state and local law enforcement agencies. S.E.C.U.R.E prosecutors are crossed-deputized as Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys, allowing them to prosecute in both state and federal court. Through these partnerships and its own independent investigations, the S.E.C.U.R.E Strike Force capably investigates and prosecutes hundreds of cases involving illegal immigration, human trafficking, and associated offenses each year.

The S.E.C.U.R.E Team of Investigators, Prosecutors and support staff are active participants in the Utah Trafficking in Persons Task Force (UTIP). In this role, they work with non-governmental organizations, victim service providers, educators, and other stakeholders to combat human trafficking throughout Utah. The S.E.C.U.R.E Team has become recognized experts in the human trafficking field, presenting on the topic across the state and at major national human trafficking conferences.

The S.E.C.U.R.E Strike Force also hosts and helps facilitate the Utah Identity Theft Task Force (ITTF). The I.T.T.F targets criminals who obtain and create false identification to perpetrate large-scale fraud and theft operations across the state. Crimes associated with identity fraud often cross

jurisdictional boundaries and affect hundreds of victims. The total loss amounts associated with these crimes can be astronomical. The S.E.C.U.R.E Strike Force pursues these cases statewide and federally, to ensure these offenders receive sentences appropriate to the scale of their crimes.

By nurturing and building these strong statewide partnerships, S.E.C.U.R.E continues to carry out the mandate of the legislature by targeting criminal enterprises associated with human trafficking, identity theft, fraudulent documents, illicit narcotics and firearms. The S.E.C.U.R.E Strike Force's unique ability to thoroughly investigate these large-scale crimes and follow-up with a large-scale prosecution of these offenders helps ensure the safety of Utah's communities and protect the rights of all Utahns.

S.E.C.U.R.E Strike Force Agents generated **129** investigations in FY 2020.

Approximate break down of investigations/arrests:

- 31 Arrests
- 46 Fraud/Forgery/Counterfeiting
- 11 Narcotics Distribution / Drug Crimes
- 50 Sex Offenses / Human Trafficking
- 4 Weapons
- 24 Search Warrants
- 22 Misc. Cases, Citizen Assist, Police Assist, etc.

S.E.C.U.R.E prosecutors filed **54** criminal cases in various jurisdictions through the state of Utah and U.S. Federal District Court in FY 2019.

- **54** State cases filed
- **2** Federal case filed
- **53** Arrest Warrants

Approximate Breakdown of Charges Filed:

- **90** Fraud/Forgery/Counterfeiting
- **61** Narcotics Distribution / Drug Crimes
- **30** Sex Offenses/Human Trafficking
- **7** Weapons
- **41** Misc. Other Charges (Kidnapping, Sale of a Child, Human Smuggling, Threat of Violence, Communications Fraud, Pattern of Unlawful Activity, Money Laundering, Assault, etc.)

*\*It should be noted that Human Trafficking investigations do not always result in Human Trafficking related charges, for various reasons, including, but not limited to, the protection of the victim(s).*

### **Notable FY 2020 Human Trafficking Related Prosecutions**

*Note: our practice in recent years has been to report only on cases where the defendant has been convicted and sentenced. However, due to the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on courts, many of our cases in this fiscal year are in a holding pattern. Therefore, we are including public information about some ongoing cases that were filed during fiscal year 2020 to give a better sense of the work we performed this year.*

- On October 3, 2019, the Utah Attorney General's Office charged **Jeffrey Fitzgerald Porter** with One Count of Aggravated Human Trafficking, a First Degree Felony; one count of Human Trafficking, a Second degree felony; two counts of Aggravated Kidnapping, each First Degree felonies; and two counts Aggravated Assault, each Third Degree Felonies. The charges arose from the Defendant's alleged exploitation of two homeless women, one of whom was engaged in a long-term relationship with the Defendant. The Defendant's conduct included arranging "clients" for these women, obtaining payment for acts of commercial sex engaged in by these women, and supplying these women with drugs to keep them engaged in commercial sex. The Defendant was alleged to have strip-searched these women when they did not return with the money obtained from engaging in commercial sex, assaulting them with a crowbar, and refusing to allow them to leave his home by barricading the exits and threatening further violence. The Defendant was held to answer on the charges after a preliminary hearing in December, 2019 and is currently awaiting a trial date.

See Attached [KUTV News story on Jeffrey Porter](#)

- On October 8, 2019, the Utah Attorney General's Office charged former Maricopa County Assessor **Paul Petersen** with: one count of Pattern of Unlawful Activity, a Second Degree Felony, four counts of Human Smuggling, a Third Degree Felony, three counts of Communications Fraud, a Second Degree Felony, and three counts of Sale of a Child, a Third Degree felony. The charges arose from an investigation into an illegal adoption scheme Petersen ran wherein he recruited pregnant women in the Marshall Islands to place their children for adoption to couples in the United States. The Marshallese women were offered payment and transportation to the United States in exchange for following through with the adoptions. The Human Smuggling and Sale of a Child counts were based on Petersen recruiting, paying, and transporting the Marshallese women into the United States for purposes of adoption in violation of international law. The Communications Fraud counts were based on Petersen's misrepresentations to the American couples adopting the children, who were never informed about the unlawful nature of the adoptions. There were elements of trafficking victimization involved as well, as some of the Marshallese women were alleged they were defrauded and coerced into participating in the scheme.

Petersen was also charged with several felony offenses in Arizona and Arkansas, for crimes related to the same scheme.

In July of 2020, Petersen pleaded guilty to crimes in all three cases. In Utah, he pleaded to one count of Communications Fraud and three counts of Human Smuggling. He admitted to transporting women into the United States for purpose of adoption and for profit, in violation of an international compact. He also admitted that he never disclosed the international adoption restrictions to American families who adopted the children involved. Sentencing for Petersen is currently set in November. All parties anticipate a prison sentence of 1-15 years in the Utah case, representing the maximum sentence.

See attached [Deseret News story on Paul Petersen Case](#)

- On November 19, 2019, the SECURE Task Force charged **John Steven Lake** with one count of Aggravated Exploitation of Prostitution, a Second degree felony; one count of Pattern of Unlawful Activity, a Second degree felony; and three counts of Exploiting a Prostitute, each 3rd degree felonies. The charges arose from Defendant's conduct involving a commercial sex worker he initially met as a client. The Defendant then began encouraging the woman to post ads for commercial sex more frequently, booked rooms for her to engage in commercial sex, and transported her for the purpose of engaging in commercial sex. On May 28, 2020, with support of the victim, Defendant pleaded guilty to one count of Exploiting Prostitution, a 3rd degree felony. The Defendant was sentenced to 60 days home-confinement (due to COVID-19), 36-months' probation, and long-term treatment with a psychosexual component.

See Attached [KSL News story on John Lake case](#)

- On March 23, 2020, the SECURE Task Force charged **David Mackey, Chandra Jones, and Andre Gomez** with two counts of Aggravated Human Trafficking of a child, each First degree felonies and two counts of Aggravated Exploitation of Prostitution Involving a Child, each Second degree felonies. Mackey, a registered sex offender from Nebraska, was also charged with Unlawful Sexual Conduct w/ a 16 or 17 year old, a Third degree felony; Sexual Exploitation of a Minor, a Second degree felony; and Failure to Register as a Sex Offender, a Third Degree felony. Gomez, a convicted felon from Georgia, was also charged with four counts of Sexual Exploitation of a Minor, each Second Degree felonies, and one count of Dealing Materials Harmful to a Minor, a Third degree felony.

The charges arose from a scheme wherein the Defendants recruited, instructed, and facilitated the trafficking of two child victims in Weber County during the summer of 2019. The defendants instructed the child victims on how to obtain "clients" through posting ads for commercial sex online, purchased hotel rooms where the sex acts would take place, and collected money from the sexual exploitation of the child victims. On June 18, 2020, Jones, the girlfriend of Mackey, pleaded guilty to two counts of Pattern of Unlawful Activity, each a Second degree felony. Jones will not be sentenced until after the resolution of cases against her co-defendants. The remaining co-defendants are awaiting a trial date.

See Attached [Deseret News Story on Mackey, Jones, and Gomez Case](#)

- On April 21, 2020, the Utah Attorney General’s Office charged **Rezvan Saisani** and **Sameer Syed** with Pattern of Unlawful Activity, a Second Degree Felony; Money Laundering, a Second Degree Felony; and three counts of Exploiting Prostitution, each Third Degree Felonies. Saisani was also charged with Maintaining a Public Nuisance, a Class B Misdemeanor. The charges arose from Saisani and Syed’s management and operation of a local motel. The motel, known for commercial sex and drug trafficking, was the long-term residence of multiple commercial sex workers that reported both Saisani and Syed were aware of their engagement in commercial sex and would allow them to use rooms at the motel for purposes of engaging in commercial sex. Saisani and Syed would require clients of commercial sex workers to pay an extra “visitor fee” directly to them in order to access the property. Saisani and Syed reportedly allowed the commercial sex workers to stay at the motel in exchange for sexual acts or without payment knowing that payment would be forthcoming from engaging in commercial sex. Both defendants are awaiting preliminary hearing dates.

See Attached [Deseret News story on City Inn Saisani and Syed Case](#)

#### **Other Notable FY 2020 S.E.C.U.R.E. Investigations and Prosecutions**

- On August 28, 2019, **Hector Cortes** was convicted of Pattern of Unlawful Activity, a Second Degree Felony. Cortes perpetrated a mail theft scheme while working for a private delivery service. Electronics retailers reported that hundreds of expensive cell phones had gone missing from Cortes’s delivery route. Investigators searched Cortes’s home and vehicle and found 112 iPhones, along with expensive clothing and other retail items. The defendant was sentenced to 175 days in jail and will be processed for deportation after his sentence. Cortes was also ordered to pay \$26,600 in restitution.
- **Wal-Mart Gift Card Fraud Cases:** The SECURE Task Force was a partner in a robust effort to investigate, arrest, and prosecute perpetrators of a large-scale fraud scheme involving Chinese nationals laundering money at Wal-Mart and Sam’s Club Stores along the Wasatch Front. In this scheme, someone working in another country makes fraudulent representations to vulnerable or elderly adults in various telephone scams. The victims are then convinced to load money onto Wal-Mart gift cards to cure the fraud that has taken place. Then Chinese nationals working in Utah use these Wal-Mart gift cards to purchase other “closed-loop” gift cards, which cannot be traced back to the original transaction. Wal-Mart Loss Prevention officers identified hundreds of victims of these scams throughout the United States and traced many of the gift cards used to local Wal-Marts in Utah, totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars in losses.

These types of cases would typically be filed as smaller scale theft cases in the jurisdictions of the individual Wal-Marts, but under UAGO authority, the SECURE Task Force was able to combine the various fraud incidents into larger, statewide cases that would be taken more seriously by the public and the courts.

On June 12, 2019, the SECURE Task Force arrested three Chinese nationals as part of this scheme. Those three cases were referred to federal authorities to prosecute, as the losses involved multiple

states. On January 23, 2020, the SECURE Strike Force arrested **Junliang Tang** and **Shuyan Wang** as part of the scheme. They both pleaded guilty in state court to Second Degree Felony Pattern of Unlawful Activity. Although the SECURE prosecutor recommended they be sent to prison, the court ordered them to a year in jail plus restitution.

See Attached [Deseret News Story – 2 Charged in National Fraud Scheme Involving Wal-Mart Gift Cards](#)

- On August 9, 2019, the SECURE Task Force obtained felony convictions of **Troy Manning and Kendrick Ables** in a large-scale identity theft, fraud, and burglary scheme with victims all along the Wasatch Front. Manning and Ables were alleged to have broken into businesses, garages, cars, and homes to steal various personal identifying information, which they then used for fraudulent credit card transactions.

A warrant to search Manning and Ables's property revealed stolen items from a long string of theft cases. SECURE Task Force was able to link together cases originating in Summit County, Park City, Bountiful, North Salt Lake, South Jordan, and Orem, and bring them together in one case charging these defendants with 14 felonies. SECURE prosecutors presented evidence from all cases at a substantial preliminary hearing. Afterwards, the defendants both pleaded guilty to second-degree felony charges including Pattern of Unlawful Activity. Manning was sentenced to a prison term of 1-15 years. Ables received 420 days in jail followed by probation.

See Attached [Deseret News Story on Manning and Ables](#)

- On December 9, 2019, the SECURE Task Force obtained convictions against **Bruno Martins Dos Santos** for Second Degree Felony Purchase, Possession, and Transfer of a Dangerous Weapon by a Restricted Person. As a person without lawful residency status in the United States, Dos Santos was a Category 1 restricted person for firearms possession. Dos Santos possessed and sold two firearms to an undercover officer, believing at the time the officer was also an undocumented resident. The defendant was sentenced to a prison term of 1-15 years, the maximum sentence for his crime. The SECURE Task Force obtained this sentence through persuasive argument at sentencing, and because they had the ability to file the case federally if the defendant refused to accept responsibility in state court.
- On January 3, 2020, the SECURE Task Force charged another large-scale fraud and check forgery case involving Cuban nationals residing in Texas who traveled to Utah to perpetrate various forms of identity fraud at Utah banks. Through its work with the Identity Theft Task Force, SECURE investigators linked together dozens of identity theft incidents at Utah banks and identified two main suspects, **Davelyn Pacheco** and **Rodolfo Deluna**. They were each charged with Second Degree Felony Pattern of Unlawful Activity, as well as several counts of Forgery. Warrants remain outstanding, as the defendants have are evading justice in Texas.
- On June 3, 2020, **Sergio Rosales-Wences** was convicted of Distributing a Controlled Substance and Aggravated Reentry of a Deported Alien in United States District Court for the District of Utah. This

case was investigated by SECURE investigators and prosecuted by the SECURE prosecution team in both state and federal court. The defendant sold methamphetamine to an undercover SECURE agent on several occasions. Ultimately, the defendant offered to sell 15 ounces of methamphetamine (a very large amount) for \$10,000. The defendant claimed direct connections to “the cartel” in Mexico. Rosales-Wences was sentenced to 78 months in federal prison, followed by deportation.

- Amidst reports of dangerous health consequences including death caused by THC “vaping” cartridges, the SECURE Task Force pursued investigations into large-scale dealers of THC products. **Anthony Studham** quickly rose to the top of the radar. Studham had already been charged twice with distributing large quantities of THC and “vape cartridges” in Utah County and Salt Lake County when SECURE investigators caught him doing it again. Studham was also alleged to have involved juveniles in his drug distribution operation. On May 11, 2020, SECURE prosecutors brought new charges for Second Degree Felony Drug Distribution and Pattern of Unlawful Activity in a third case and sought to hold Studham in custody until trial this time. Studham remained in custody and ultimately pleaded guilty to Second Degree Felony Drug Distribution in his two open cases. Due to Studham’s youth, he was sentenced to 180 days in jail followed by probation and treatment. The court made clear that he would serve prison time if he violated probation.

See Attached [Deseret News story on Studham](#)

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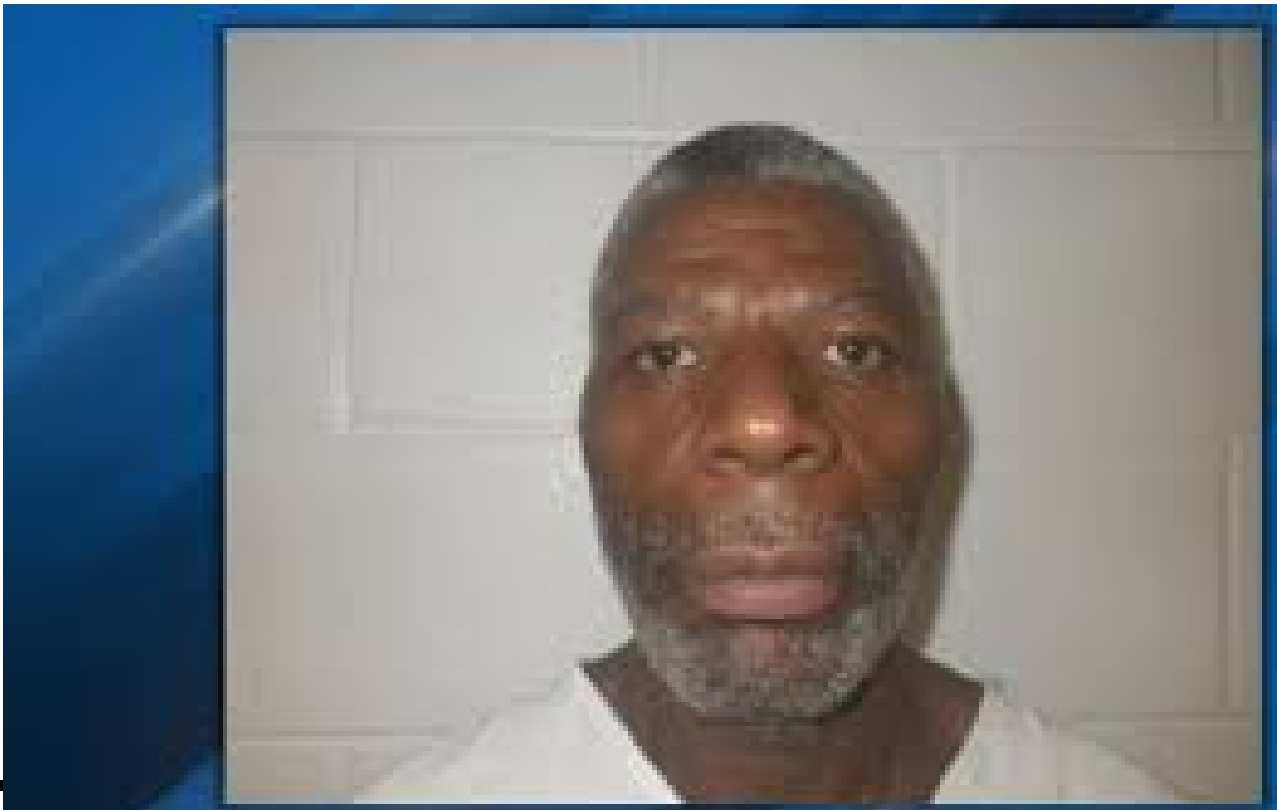
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## Utah parolee faces new charges of human trafficking, kidnapping

by Jeremy Harris

Thursday, October 3rd 2019

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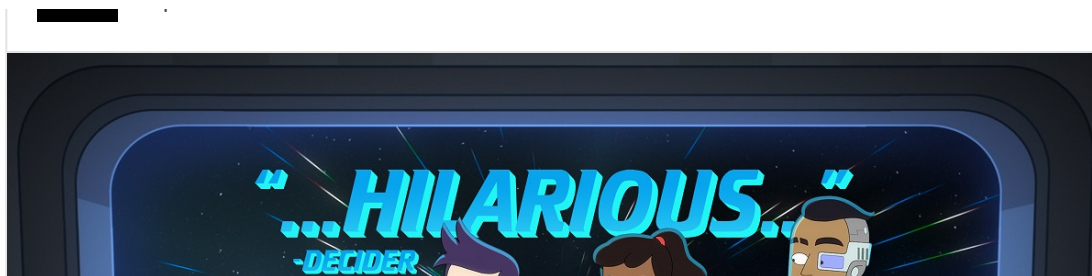
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*KUTV*

In an indictment in 3rd District Court, prosecutors from the Utah Attorney General's Office allege Jeffrey Fitzgerald Porter, 51, forced two women into prostitution between January and July of this year.

The victims reported Porter physically abused them and required them to perform paid sex acts. The women were then forced to give Porter the money or drugs they received from the sex acts, according to the charging documents.

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Over time, the victims reported they felt they were trapped by Porter. In a July incident, the victims told prosecutors Porter became suspicious they had changed his cell phone password, and beat them.

“Porter forced [The victims] to take off their clothes so that he could search them. [The victims] report that Porter took a metal bar and began hitting them, demanding they tell him what he wanted,” the indictment states.

At the time of his alleged crimes, Porter was on parole with the Utah Department of Corrections stemming from drug distribution charges. After his arrest, Porter was taken back to prison, where he is expected to remain as his new case moves forward.

Assistant Utah Attorney General Daniel Strong with the Secure Strike Force says, unfortunately, cases like this are common.

“*“The scope of this problem may not be easy to fathom, or even ascertain,” Strong told 2News.*

Strong says law enforcement is trying to change the perception of the victims in similar cases and build a rapport with them to help prosecute human traffickers.

“I think we are getting a bit of a track record after prevailing on some of these cases where some of the people out there can get help and the trafficker can be sent to prison,” Strong said.

The victims of human trafficking often come from vulnerable backgrounds and get hooked on drugs and then forced into prostitution.

“I think in the past, people have had a tendency to view them as ‘oh, that’s a prostitute.’ our model has been, approach people first as victims, if we have any reason to believe they are victims,” Strong said.

UTAH U.S. &amp; WORLD POLITICS

## Former Arizona official pleads guilty in Utah adoption scheme

Authorities say 40 women came to Utah from the Marshall Islands to place babies for adoption

By Annie Knox | @anniebknox | Jun 19, 2020, 1:22pm MDT



Paul Petersen, left, makes his initial appearance at the Matheson Courthouse in Salt Lake City with his attorney, Scott Williams, on Friday, Nov. 15, 2019. Petersen pleaded guilty Friday to communications fraud and three counts of human smuggling. | Scott G Winterton, Deseret News

**SALT LAKE CITY** — The dozens of women from a tiny Pacific island nation drew little attention as they traveled to Utah. It was only after they moved in together and began giving birth in hospitals along the Wasatch Front that neighbors and medical workers grew suspicious.

Soon Utah authorities were investigating several calls made to a human trafficking tip line. A wave of women from the Marshall Islands was giving birth and placing their

babies for adoption, each with the same home address, a house belonging to attorney Paul Petersen.

More than eight months after his arrest in the multistate illegal adoption scheme, Petersen admitted Tuesday to defrauding one Utah family and smuggling three women to Utah.

Petersen, 44, resigned from his job in Arizona as Maricopa County's assessor in January. He pleaded guilty in that state Thursday to collaborating to get state-funded health care for adoptive mothers, even though he knew the women didn't live in Arizona.

Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes and his counterpart from the Marshall Islands joined others in cheering this week's developments. They credit teamwork between states and nations for what they said is a swift resolution that will lead to a hefty penalty for Petersen, who faces up to 15 years just in the Utah prison system.

"As a result, Utah today is safer, America is safer, the Marshall Islands is safer," Reyes said.

Investigators navigated the intricacies of international law and cultural differences to pursue the case, said Leo Lucey, investigations chief in the attorney general's office.

"It's a very fascinating, disturbing, sad story of exploitation," he said. "It's exploitation based on religion, based on race, based on socioeconomic status ... and based on education."

An adoption lawyer licensed to practice in Utah, Arizona and Arkansas, Petersen had served a Latter-day Saint mission in the Marshall Islands.

He entered guilty pleas in Salt Lake City's 3rd District Court Friday to three counts of human smuggling, a third-degree felony, and communications fraud, a second-degree felony.

Defense attorney Scott Williams read facts supporting the pleas, saying his client bought plane tickets for three women who traveled from the Marshall Islands to Utah

in 2017 and 2018. Peterson owned and managed the house each lived in and accepted \$35,000 from those seeking to adopt their babies, Williams said.

In order to secure an adoption contract, his client purposely did not tell two adoptive parents about an agreement between the U.S. and the Pacific Island nation prohibiting such travel without a visa, Williams said.

In the Friday hearing held over video, Petersen tuned in from Arizona, sitting next to his attorney and responding, “Guilty, your honor,” when she asked for his pleas.

Authorities in Utah have said he brought at least 40 women from the Marshall Islands to the Beehive State to place their babies for adoption over three years, offering each \$10,000. Citizens of the island nation have been barred from traveling to the U.S. for adoptions since 2003.

The women received little or no prenatal care, prosecutors alleged.

Assistant attorney general Dan Strong said he hopes the case will deter similar crimes and remind the public to remain skeptical.

“If something seems too good to be true, it probably is,” he said. “Someone’s probably taking shortcuts.”

Andrea Sherman, with the Refugee and Immigrant Center, said her agency worked with 30 of the women, while still others returned to the Marshall Islands or sought services elsewhere, she said.

While some went through with the adoptions — after being equipped with attorneys, advocates and interpreters — others declined, Sherman told reporters.

Richard Hickson, attorney general for the Marshall Islands, said many of the women Petersen brought to Utah are receiving help from agencies in the U.S. but are “effectively stateless” right now. “He’s left a trail of devastation behind him, Mr. Petersen has.”

Hickson urged those seeking to adopt to go through proper channels in the nation’s court system.

Jini Roby, a Provo-based attorney who helped author the 2002 Marshall Islands law establishing a legal process to adopt, said before the government tightened regulations, many U.S. military families stationed there brought Marshallese children back home. She estimates a total of 700 to 800 vanished.

Roby said she was happy to see that authorities are now connecting the dots between human trafficking and some international adoptions.

“I believe that this going to reverberate throughout the global community of adoption,” she said.

Utah prosecutors agreed to recommend one to 15 years in the Utah State Prison, with lesser terms of up to five years for the other three charges to run concurrently, or at the same time. Williams is seeking for the Utah prison sentence to run alongside others in Arizona, where his client faces a maximum of 17 years in prison, and in Arkansas, where he is expected to enter guilty pleas next week.

Petersen will also pay \$50,000 to the Utah Attorney General’s Office to cover costs of investigation and prosecution. He has agreed not to practice law in Utah or work on adoption proceedings here for the duration of his sentence.

Petersen had faced an additional seven charges in Utah, but prosecutors agreed to drop them as part of the plea bargain. They are an additional count of human smuggling, three counts of sale of a child and two more of communications fraud, plus one count of pattern of unlawful activity.

Sentencing is scheduled for Nov. 13.



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# Salt Lake man charged with forcing woman into prostitution

By Pat Reavy, KSL | Posted - Nov. 22, 2019 at 1:47 p.m.

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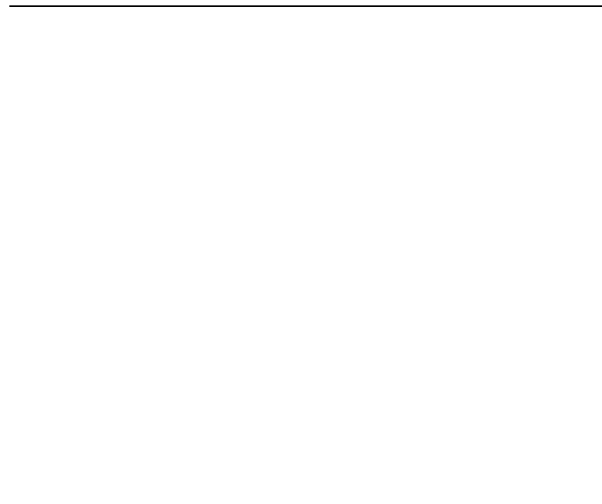
SALT LAKE CITY — A Salt Lake man is accused of forcing a woman into prostitution.

John Steven Lake, 59, was charged in 3rd District Court by the Utah Attorney General's Office with aggravated exploitation of prostitution and engaging in a pattern of unlawful activity, both second-degree felonies; and three counts of exploiting a prostitute, a third-degree felony.

The investigation began in June when a woman was flown by medical helicopter from West Wendover to University of Utah Hospital in Salt Lake City. At the hospital, the woman told investigators that she had met Lake a year earlier and at first he seemed to want to help her, according to charging documents.

“At a certain point, however, Lake began encouraging (the woman) to offer ‘body massages,’” the charges state. “(The woman) explained that at that point in her life she was so humiliated and so defeated that she gave in and agreed to begin engaging in commercial sex.”

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The woman also told police that “she was addicted to heroin and needed money to maintain her habit,” and that Lake “would encourage her to ‘make money, make money’ and he would assist in finding customers,” according to charging documents. Lake also threatened to tell the woman’s family what she was doing if she left.

The woman provided Lake with \$400 to \$500 per week, the charges state.

Lake invited the woman to go with him to West Wendover on two occasions, according to the woman. On at least one trip he forced her into working while she was there, the charges state.

One night, the woman claimed she was approached by two women and a man, had dinner with them and then went to her hotel room. She awoke “badly beaten, at the bottom of a

The woman was flown by medical helicopter to Salt Lake City at that time.

On Aug. 20, investigators searched Lake’s cellphone and found text messages between him and the woman on at least six different days in which they “discussed (the woman’s) involvement in commercial sex, the placement of internet ads related to (the woman’s) work in commercial sex, Lake’s appointments with (the woman) and Lake’s desired sexual acts,” the charges state.

An initial court appearance was scheduled for Monday.

Pat Reavy



5 Comments

0 Pending

**UPDATE:** Comment limits have temporarily changed. [Click here](#) for more information.

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UTAH POLICE/COURTS SALT LAKE COUNTY

# Two Utah men, woman face child sex trafficking charges

By Dennis Romboy | @dennisromboy | Apr 1, 2020, 5:36pm MDT



Adobe Stock image

SALT LAKE CITY — Two Utah men and a woman, including one previously convicted of murder, face criminal charges for allegedly forcing two teenage girls into prostitution.

Andre Gomez, 40, David Anthony Mackey, 42, and Chandra Jones, 35, face multiple felony counts for human trafficking of a child, aggravated exploitation of prostitution and sexual exploitation of a minor. Mackey also faces a charge of unlawful sexual contact with a 16- or 17-year-old for allegedly having sex with one of the girls.

One of the 17-year-old girls told a Juvenile Justice Services therapist last September that she and her friend were the victims of human trafficking for purposes of sexual

exploitation. The therapist contacted agents with the Utah Attorney General's SECURE Strike Force.

The girl told investigators that after she walked away from juvenile services custody last June, she met a man named Anthony who asked her if wanted to make some money. He told her to reach out his friend Andre on Facebook. The girl and her friend contacted Andre and he instructed them to send him nude and partially nude photos of themselves for posting on adult websites as online ads for sex, according to charging documents.

Both girls went to a hotel in Ogden where they met Mackey and his girlfriend, Jones. Jones explained what they were expected to do and how to act, including how to post ads, how to accept money from clients, how to talk to clients and how to dispose of condoms, investigators say.

The girls had sex with clients at the hotel, and Mackey kept the money that they were paid, according to court documents. Mackey and Jones then took the girls to a Salt Lake hotel to meet other clients for sex, but weren't able to because the couple got into a fight after they got there.

Investigators say Mackey and Jones were both aware of the girls' ages.

Mackey and Gomez are both convicted felons who have spent time in prison for violent crimes, and Gomez was previously convicted of murder, according to the attorney general's office.

Both girls were referred to the Refugee Immigrant Center-Asian Association of Utah, which provides comprehensive services to aid human trafficking victims. The attorney general's office said its victim coordinator is also in regular contact the girls to ensure their rights are represented as the case moves forward.

## Coronavirus: The latest



### Utah reports 987 new virus cases

UTAH POLICE/COURTS SALT LAKE COUNTY

# Owner, manager of Salt Lake motel encouraged prostitution, police say

By Pat Reavy | @DNNewsCrimeTeam | Apr 21, 2020, 7:25pm MDT



Salt Lake police investigate a stabbing at the Salt City Inn motel in Salt Lake City on May 30, 2012. | Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret News

**SALT LAKE CITY** — The owner and manager of a Salt Lake motel face criminal charges accusing them of encouraging prostitutes to use their rooms for business.

Rezvan Saisani, 55, and Sameer Syed, 29, were charged Tuesday in 3rd District Court with engaging in a pattern of unlawful activity and money laundering, second-degree felonies; three counts of exploiting prostitution, a third-degree felony; and being a public nuisance, a class B misdemeanor.

The Statewide Enforcement of Crimes by Undocumented Residents task force in the Utah Attorney General's Office, in conjunction with Salt Lake police, began investigating the Salt City Inn, 1025 N. 900 West, during the summer of 2019 because it was "being used for commercial sex and drug trafficking," according to charging documents.

Saisani is listed in court documents as the owner and operator of Salt City Inn and Syed as the manager.

"Agents received multiple tips that Saisani and Syed were not only aware of the City Inn property being used for commercial sex and drug trafficking, but Saisani and Syed encouraged such activity in order to benefit financially," the charges state.

The men collected "visitor fees" from "every party visiting a commercial sex worker at the City Inn. Agents were told that fee was a minimum of \$10 and was paid directly to Saisani or Syed by any party coming onto the City Inn property to engage in a transaction with one of the commercial sex workers residing long term at the City Inn," according to charging documents.

The men would also trade free rent with some of the prostitutes in exchange for sex acts, the charges state.

Investigators conducted undercover operations at the motel as part of their investigation. Several prostitutes were also interviewed for the investigation, many of whom told police that Saisani (and) Syed knew commercial sex work was happening at the motel and encouraged it, the charging documents allege.

Agents obtained six search warrants for rooms and locations at the Salt City Inn. Those warrants were served in early February and resulted in several people being charged with drug distribution.

James Butler Brown, 51, was charged Tuesday with exploiting prostitution, a third-degree felony, and two counts of aiding prostitution, a class A misdemeanor. According to charging documents, Brown was a resident at the Salt City Inn, sold narcotics from his room and would refer his drug clients to the commercial sex workers.

UTAH POLICE/COURTS UTAH COUNTY

## 2 charged in national fraud scheme involving Walmart gift cards

Investigators say more than \$239K was laundered and 204 people from 46 states defrauded in 8 days

By Amy Donaldson | @adonsports | Jan 31, 2020, 11:03am MST



Stock image

**AMERICAN FORK** — Two people were arrested and face charges associated with a massive national fraud scheme in which they are accused of convincing people, typically elderly people, into loading thousands of dollars onto Walmart gift cards, which they then allegedly used to buy other gift cards that they sold online.

The scheme is responsible for more than \$600,000 in losses to fraud victims and Walmart, according to charges filed in 4th District Court.



Junliang Tang | Utah County Jail

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Shuyan Wang | Utah County Jail

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Junliang Tang, 35, and Shuyan Wang, 23, were both charged with money laundering, pattern of unlawful activity and unlawful use of card, all second degree felonies.

Prosecutors asked for a higher bail than usual as they see both of the accused as “serious flight risks” because they are Chinese nationals.

Investigators say the complicated scheme typically targets elderly people and they typically pose as IRS or government agents, computer service technicians or bail bondsmen.

A Walmart investigator said such criminals then convince people to “load large sums of money onto Walmart gift cards,” the charges state. “After the gift cards are loaded, a network of purchasers enter Walmart stores and use the fraudulently obtained Walmart gift cards to purchase other “closed loop” gift cards, such as Apple iTunes gift cards, Nintendo cards, etc. Those ‘closed loop’ gift cards are then monetized into cash through various online marketplaces.”

A closed loop gift card is one that can only be used with a specific vendor. Those cards can, however, be monetized in other ways, including selling them online.

The case began to come together for investigators on Jan. 22 when a Walmart loss prevention officer in Saratoga Springs contacted a detective to report that a woman had purchased \$1,600 in various gift cards on her phone as payment. He provided investigators with her licence plate number, which matched the plates of a car observed days earlier working with a male suspect in Oregon, police say.

On Jan. 23, a Walmart loss prevention officer saw a man in the same Walmart purchasing \$1,800 in gift cards in several transactions.

“The gift cards were purchased using barcodes from Walmart gift cards loaded onto the (suspect’s) cellphone,” the charges state. “This was the same method (an investigator) observed (with) the ... woman using the day before.”

At about the same time, an American Fork police sergeant located the woman from the previous day’s incident purchasing gift cards at an American Fork Walmart, according to the charges.

Walmart senior global investigator Brandon Hunter was in Salt Lake City “at this same time briefing agents with the Utah Attorney General’s Office about the scheme he was investigating.”

Police were able to piece together an incident involving a Utah victim. The woman told police that “someone claiming to be a police officer” called her and her husband and instructed them “to purchase several thousand dollars in Walmart gift cards.”

Police were able to confirm the gift cards she and her husband purchased were among those used by the suspect because they’d asked them to send them the barcodes on the gift cards, and those were used in the purchases at two locations.

When interviewed by police, Tang said “he was being paid to buy gift cards at Walmart locations by someone he said he had met online. Tang said he was paid 1% to 2% of the total dollar amount of the gift cards he purchased and uploaded into a digital form for people in China to access,” the charges state.

In total, investigators have “connected 1,379 Walmart gift cards to transactions executed by Tang and Wang in Utah between Jan. 16 and Jan. 23. These cards were purchased by 204 different people from 46 states over the exact same time period, shortly before the cards were used at Utah Walmart stores,” according to the charges.

“In total, over \$239,472.38 was laundered in this fashion between those dates.”

**Contributing:** Pat Reavy



UTAH POLICE/COURTS

## 2 charged in string of northern Utah thefts

By Ashley Imlay | @ashley\_imalay | Oct 31, 2018, 6:23pm MDT



Two men face a long list of charges in a string of burglaries spanning northern Utah after investigators say they found a variety of stolen items and vehicles in the men's possession. | Stock image

**SALT LAKE CITY** — Two men face a long list of charges in a string of burglaries spanning northern Utah after investigators say they found a variety of stolen items and vehicles in the men's possession.

Troy Jones Manning, 38, and Kendrick C. Ables, 27, were both charged Wednesday in 3rd District Court with a pattern of unlawful activity, producing or transferring any false identification document, and two counts of theft by receiving stolen property, all second-degree felonies.

They also both face multiple counts of unlawful acquisition, possession or transfer of a financial transaction card, a third-degree felony, among other burglary and theft

charges.

According to the charges, when police arrested Manning on investigation of burglary, they found a fake driver's license in his vehicle with his picture but another person's name and address on it.

Detectives listened to Manning's phone calls while he was in jail and heard him talk about a "white printer" in an apartment that belonged to Ables, charges state.

When agents searched that apartment, they found printers, tablets, phones, hard drives and other equipment, as well as files titled "dl template 2" and "dl template 21" that agents believe were used to manufacture phony driver's licenses, charges state.

A person who was on probation and dating Ables at the time the search took place told police the men were "producing fraudulent identification documents using the computers and printers at the apartment," agents said.

That person also told police the two were burglarizing vehicles and businesses and had taken two trailers, in which they stored other stolen items, according to the charges.

Agents found the two stolen trailers and an SUV at Ables' apartment complex, charges state, along with "numerous stolen items from various burglaries."

Among those items, a laptop and tools that had been taken when a business in South Jordan was "ransacked" in April were found in the stolen SUV, agents said. GPS data from Manning's phone showed that he was in the area at the time of the burglary, charges state.

Agents also linked the men to a variety of other robberies, including several credit card thefts that had occurred in Orem, North Salt Lake, Bountiful, Park City and around Summit County, according to the charges.

This isn't the first time the men have faced prosecution.

In 2013, Manning was arrested for investigation of sexual solicitation and drug possession after allegedly participating in a "live sex show" at Syracuse 6 Movie Theater, according to the Syracuse Police Department.

In September, Manning pleaded guilty to theft, a second-degree felony, after stealing a truck that was being worked on at a shop and then crashing the truck in Parleys Canyon. He is scheduled to be sentenced in that case Nov. 13.

Ables was charged in March with forgery, a third-degree felony, unlawful use of a financial transaction card and burglary of a vehicle, both class A misdemeanors, and theft, a class B misdemeanor.



UTAH POLICE/COURTS

## Sandy man facing 3rd set of charges involving THC distribution in less than a year

By Pat Reavy | @DNewsCrimeTeam | May 11, 2020, 11:28am MDT



Anthony Studham | Salt Lake County Jail

WEST JORDAN — A Sandy man who has already been convicted in one case of distributing THC vape cartridges and currently faces charges in a second case has been charged yet again after prosecutors say his ongoing criminal proceedings have not deterred him.

Anthony Studham, 21, was charged Monday in 3rd District Court by the Utah Attorney General's Office with engaging in a pattern of unlawful activity, two counts of money laundering, drug distribution, and drug possession with intent to distribute, all second-degree felonies.

Prosecutors are also seeking to seize \$37,270 found in Studham's residence, and an additional \$16,365 found in a car he was in. The money is believed to be from drug sales, according to charging documents.

In October, Studham pleaded guilty in 4th District Court to drug possession, a third-degree felony, and two other misdemeanor crimes. He was placed on probation for a year.

But just one month later, he was arrested again for allegedly selling large amounts of black market THC vape cartridges, according to police. He was charged in February with drug distribution and drug possession with intent to distribute, both second-degree felonies; and possession of drug paraphernalia, a class B misdemeanor.

Then in March, Studham was arrested yet again for allegedly engaging in similar behavior, according to police.

According to charging documents, police have been conducting an ongoing investigation into Studham "for distributing large shipments of THC cartridges and marijuana throughout the Salt Lake Valley."

He typically uses his social media accounts to post "pictures appearing to advertise marijuana sales, including posting information about new shipments coming in. Studham also posts pictures of firearms, often immediately before or after posting about marijuana sales," the charges state. "Since Studham's arrest in November, (police have) continued to receive reports and observe evidence Studham is still distributing marijuana."

Investigators learned Studham was "still making regular trips to California to pick up large marijuana shipments," according to the charges.

Typically, Studham would rent vehicles to drive to California then "quickly distribute these shipments throughout the Salt Lake Valley to avoid holding large quantities of marijuana himself," the charges state.