



Trafficking and more...

.... see what happened this past week in the Eastern District of Louisiana

CASE SPOTLIGHT

United States v. Johnson (EDLA 24-cr-221)

What's the Basis?: According to the criminal complaint (which later served as the basis for the indictment in this matter), **Johnson**, an adult who was employed as a teacher, met a minor through Facebook after learning that she was a runaway. The evidence showed that he drove from New Orleans to Vicksburg, Mississippi, during the night of March 14, 2024, picked her up, and transported her across state lines to his New Orleans apartment.

Investigators connected **Johnson** to the trip through corroborating evidence. Highway cameras documented his vehicle traveling toward Mississippi and later returning to his residence. Facebook messages reflected **Johnson** coordinating the pickup, directing the minor away from an area where cameras might record them, and providing the telephone number associated with his employment records. Subsequent text messages discussed payment for sex, and financial records showed that an Apple Cash account associated with **Johnson** sent the minor \$200.

What's the Violation?: **Johnson** was found guilty of **sex trafficking of a minor and coercion of a minor to engage in sexual activity**, in violation of **18 U.S.C. §§ 1591(a)(1), (b)(2), and 2422(b)**.

What's the Sentence?: Judge Lance M. Africk sentenced **Johnson** to **396 months of imprisonment**, and a **LIFE time of supervised release**.

DID YOU KNOW?

Federal offenses involving the trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors carry extraordinarily severe penalties, including mandatory minimum sentences and the possibility of life imprisonment. When the victim is between 14 and 17 years old, § 1591(b)(2) generally imposes a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and permits a sentence of up to life imprisonment for sex trafficking. Similarly, § 2422(b), which prohibits using interstate communications to entice or coerce a minor to engage in unlawful sexual activity, also carries a mandatory minimum of 10 years and a maximum sentence of life.

WHAT'S THAT STATUTE?
CLICK ON THE LINKS BELOW FOR MORE
DETAILS ON THE VIOLATIONS INCLUDED IN
THIS WEEK'S EDITION

- [18 U.S.C. § 1591](#)
- [18 U.S.C. § 2422](#)



In this week's Case Spotlight, the defendant was convicted of both offenses and received a sentence of 396 months in federal prison (the equivalent of 33 years). The sentence illustrates that the statutory minimum is only the starting point. These statutes do not require the government to prove that the defendant used physical force or that the minor was forcibly abducted. Further, when the acts involve a minor, the minor's apparent agreement or willingness generally does not provide a defense to a sex-trafficking charge. Likewise, the defendant can be guilty of enticing or coercing the minor even if the sexual activity was not ultimately completed. The 396-month sentence in this case demonstrates that conduct involving the sexual exploitation of a minor can expose a defendant to decades in federal prison, even when the underlying events occurred over a relatively short period of time.

