

Nassau Cops Bust 104 Johns in Online Prostitution Sting

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Nassau County authorities rounded up 104 men for patronizing prostitutes in a month-long sting in which suspects responding to Internet ads met undercover officers at hotels, where they were recorded buying sex.

The high-tech sting targeting “Johns,” as men who patronize prostitutes are commonly called, is aimed at suppressing demand for Long Island’s black-market sex trade. The suspects accused in “Operation Flush the Johns” include professionals such as doctors, dentists, lawyers, bankers and teachers.



Nassau County police released the mug shots of 104 suspected Johns arrested for patronizing a prostitute after allegedly responding to online ads posted by undercover officers (NCDA).

“My hope is that this will dry up the demand for prostitution,” Nassau Country District Attorney Kathleen Rice told reporters during a news conference Monday at her office in Mineola. “These are not victimless crimes.”

The bust marks a dramatic change of tactics for local law enforcement, which typically arrests prostitutes but rarely target Johns. Fewer than 40 people were arrested for patronizing prostitutes over the past decade.

Dennis Lemke, a Mineola-based defense attorney who represents one of the accused Johns nabbed in the dragnet, expressed his concern for his client's family when the man's name and mug shot was made public at the press conference.

"They put themselves on the board and they are going to have to explain," Rice responded.

Nassau County Police Commissioner Tom Dale said 75 of the accused Johns were from Nassau County. The remainder came from Suffolk County, New York City and states such as New Jersey, Georgia and Maine. A half dozen of the suspects were from Westbury, making it home to the one LI town with the most Johns caught.

The Johns responded to ads on the website Backpage.com to arrange meetings with undercover police officers posing as prostitutes. After offering the "prostitutes" money in exchange for sex, the men were arrested. Hidden cameras hooked up by undercover officers recorded the meetings.

Rice and Dale hope the bust will serve as a warning to other would-be Johns that the prospect of getting caught is growing. They did not disclose the hotels that were used in the sting.

The men have all pleaded not guilty to third-degree patronizing a prostitute. If convicted, they face up to one year in jail.