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Diplomatic Security Service dismantles international sex trafficking network

DSS ARTICLES

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On a warm spring day in June 2023, a team of Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) special agents drove quietly through the upscale Hollywood, Fla., community toward the home of the man they investigated for six years. The pre-arrest anticipation was high as they parked, quietly exited the car, and quickly moved into positions around the home with guns drawn. A DSS special agent broke the silence with a hard knock on the door and a verbal command.

"Police, search warrant, open the door!"





DSS special agents (center, in DSS tactical vest and far right) and an HSI special agent (front, left) serve a search and arrest warrant at the home of Anton Panin in Hollywood, Fla., June 7, 2023. (U.S. Department of State photo)

The door opened on the third and final request. DSS executed the search and arrest warrant and [arrested Anton Panin](#) for recruiting women to travel from Russia and Eastern European countries to the United States to work as prostitutes for his company, XO Companions. The women Panin recruited concealed their participation in sex work when applying for visas to travel to the United States, and the visa violations kicked off the DSS investigation into this multijurisdictional, transnational crime.



DSS special agents (front and back left) and an HSI special agent (back right) take Anton Panin (front right) into custody after serving a search and arrest warrant at his home in Hollywood, Fla., June 7, 2023. (U.S. Department of State photo)

Special Agent Matthew Cusack played a key role as a lead investigator on the team that executed the warrant. "This case began with a single tip submitted to the DSS passport and visa fraud inbox eight years ago. It's rewarding to witness how the collaboration among multiple law enforcement agencies dismantled Panin's commercial prostitution operation and delivered justice for the victims."





A DSS evidence custodian (center) provides evidence collection kits to DSS and HSI special agents to process Panin's home, Hollywood, Fla., June 7, 2023. (U.S. Department of State photo)



Cash, jewelry and thumb drives (suspected of containing cryptocurrency proceeds from Panin's operations) confiscated because of a DSS search warrant, Hollywood, Fla., June 7, 2023. (U.S. Department of State photo)



A DSS intelligence research specialist supervises the seizure of Panin's Trike (three-wheeled motorcycle), BMW SUV, and Tesla Model X with a specialty Florida "Family Values" license plate, Hollywood, Fla., June 7, 2023. (U.S. Department of State photo)

The DSS operation, aptly named Members Only, synchronized the arrest of Panin and three of his accomplices in two different states with assistance from HSI; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation; and the United States Attorney's Offices for the Middle District of Pennsylvania and Southern District of Florida.

Victoria Zakirova in Miami helped Panin recruit women, and Jennie and Tracey Lawson in Pennsylvania communicated with prostitutes for XO Companions and arranged for hotel rooms in the United States so that they could have sex with XO customers. Panin instructed the women to send the proceeds inside newly purchased toys and games, which the Lawsons then physically transported to Panin in Florida. XO Companions also operated a password-protected website for clients to view schedules, services offered, reserve time, and provide reviews.

DSS also executed search warrants for evidence at a storage facility and a local gym, owned and operated by Panin, that he used to launder proceeds from XO Companions.

Following Anton Panin's arrest in 2023, DSS, HSI, and the FBI interviewed numerous women across the United States who had worked for XO Companions. Based on victim testimonies and substantial electronic and physical evidence obtained during the 2023 search warrant, Panin and his coconspirators pleaded guilty.

On October 14, 2025, Panin was [sentenced](#) to 46 months in prison. The court also ordered him to pay \$217,000 in restitution and to forfeit all illegally obtained assets. On November 25, 2025, Victoria Zakirova was sentenced to one year in prison, and on January 27, 2026, Jennie Lawson received a five-

year probation sentence, while Tracey Lawson was sentenced to one year of probation.

Deputy Assistant Director for the DSS Office of Investigations William Ferrari commended the team: "This investigation began in 2017 and culminated in the carefully planned and coordinated arrest of Panin and his associates. I want to commend the exceptional agents, analysts, support personnel, and law enforcement partners whose dedication and teamwork made these arrests possible."

Discover more about DSS transnational criminal investigations into human smuggling and trafficking by clicking [here](#).

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