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2 Colombians held in sex trafficking case

By Matt Rocheleau | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JULY 11, 2013

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Two Colombian nationals face charges of sex trafficking and running a house of prostitution in Allston following a yearlong, ongoing investigation, authorities said.

A judge ordered Hector Gallego, 50, and Wider Gomez Agudelo, 41, held on \$75,000 bail and on immigration detainers at their arraignments last week in Brighton District Court, said Renee Nadeau Algarin, spokeswoman for the Suffolk district attorney's office.

Both men pleaded not guilty to charges of trafficking a person for sexual servitude, deriving support from prostitution, and keeping a house of prostitution, Algarin said by e-mail Wednesday.

"From what we've been able to determine about the operation thus far, it exploited numerous women,

almost all of them immigrants,” Algarin said.

“The women were expected to engage in sexual contact with multiple strangers for money that would go almost entirely to the defendants,” she continued. “It’s similar to other operations we’ve seen, in which the victims are not allowed to leave until they’re rotated to another trafficking operation.”

Federal officials, including agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Boston police obtained a federal search warrant. On June 20, the investigators raided an apartment at 255 Cambridge St., where prosecutors said the prostitution operation was being run, said Algarin.

There, authorities seized: cash; identification and immigration documents, some of which were real and some of which were fake; handcuffs; phones and communication devices; and paraphernalia associated with prostitution, Algarin said.

During the search, Gallego allegedly “engaged officers in a violent struggle,” injuring two ICE special agents, Algarin said. He has also been charged with two counts of assault and battery on a police officer.

Both men were arrested the day of the search and detained, Algarin said. Formal criminal charges were filed against them June 28.

The search was part of a yearlong, continuing investigation into an alleged human trafficking operation, she said.

One day after the search, Shawn Neudauer, a spokesman for ICE, responded to questions by providing a brief statement describing the search as “a law enforcement operation in Boston” involving agents from ICE’s Homeland Security Investigations unit and agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives and Boston police. He and authorities from other agencies, did not comment further until Algarin’s e-mail Wednesday.

Gallego and Agudelo are scheduled to return to court July 15, Algarin said.

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