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IN EFFECT UNTIL SEP 18, 6:15 p.m.

Memphis police officer arrested on sex trafficking charge

Investigation of MPD patrolman began in '11

By Jody Callahan, Memphis Commercial Appeal

Posted September 18, 2012 at 7:16 a.m.

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Sean McWhirter

A Memphis Police Department patrolman was charged Monday in a case involving prostitution and sex trafficking, becoming the latest in a long string of local law-enforcement officers accused of criminal behavior.

Sean McWhirter, 30, was charged with transportation of women in interstate commerce for prostitution. He was arrested Sunday and has been released on \$10,000 bail.

McWhirter, who joined the force in July 2007, has been relieved of duty with pay. The officer, who has been suspended by MPD for past violations, works out of the Union Station precinct.

Since 2003, more than 40 officers and civilian employees of the Memphis Police Department have been indicted on a variety of charges, including robbery, extortion and drug conspiracy.

"You would think that by now, the message is clear: Nobody is exempt (from obeying the law)," MPD Director Toney Armstrong said. "Even excluding anything he's done in the past, this alone sets him so far apart from what a police officer is supposed to do. There's just no excuse for it."

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According to a press release from the U.S. Attorney's Office, McWhirter shuttled women between Memphis and Tunica for prostitution.

An [FBI](#) criminal complaint of McWhirter's alleged acts reads like a lurid paperback, and paints the officer as a pimp running a small prostitution ring.

The investigation began in May 2011, when an informant told the FBI McWhirter frequented clubs known for drug use and prostitution.

In June, according to the complaint, the FBI tapped McWhirter's cellphone, discovering that he was in regular contact with prostitutes. Five months later, the source told the FBI that McWhirter brought three women into a club and announced to everyone that they belonged to him.

Over the course of the next few months, the informant asked McWhirter several times if he could procure two or three women for a party planned for Tunica. It was made clear that the women would need to perform sex acts.

McWhirter eventually said it would cost \$50 for each girl, but that one woman might not take part because she was his girlfriend. He expected that the other two would be willing, because, "them ho's are going to get what they get."

Last Thursday, the informant paid \$120 upfront for the women, then was told that he would need at least \$20 more for each one. The deal was struck, and around 11 p.m. Sunday, McWhirter arrived at a Tunica hotel, two hours late for the "party."

When McWhirter walked into the room, FBI agents arrested him. A search revealed that McWhirter was carrying his MPD-issued service weapon.

If convicted, McWhirter faces up to 10 years in federal prison and a fine of no more than \$250,000.

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