

Man gets 14 years for enslaving women as exotic dancers

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Detroit (AP). A Livonia man who pleaded guilty to bringing Eastern European women to the United States and forcing them to work as exotic dancers was sentenced Monday to 14 years in prison. Aleksander Maksimenko also was ordered to pay restitution totaling more than \$1.5 million, the amount authorities said he and a co-defendant took from the dancers. About \$537,000 seized from his home will be used to compensate victims.

Maksimenko, 27, pleaded guilty in 2006 to involuntary servitude, alien smuggling conspiracy and money laundering conspiracy. He and Michail Aronov, a 33-year-old Lithuanian citizen from the Chicago area, were arrested in 2005. Maksimenko "was and is nothing more than a commonplace pimp," U.S. District Judge Victoria Roberts said Monday.

Authorities said the two used the business name Beauty Search Inc. to bring at least 12 women from the Ukraine and elsewhere and forced them to work 12-hour days six days a week as exotic dancers at Detroit-area strip clubs. The two men acknowledged as part of their plea agreements that they kept the women's passports, threatened to report them to the government as illegal immigrants and subjected them to physical violence.

They also imposed thousands of dollars in debt on the women, which was paid by surrendering the money they made dancing, authorities said. Two of the dancers said the men forced them to have sex with them. According to court records, Maksimenko told investigators he felt it was his right as the boss to have sex with his female employees.

Maksimenko, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in Ukraine, is the third of nine defendants to be sentenced in the case. Aronov pleaded guilty to similar charges in 2005. He is scheduled to be sentenced Aug. 16.