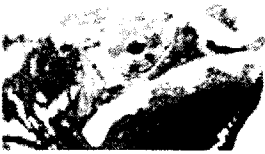


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► Menu

Home

News

Sport

Letters

West Ham United

The Daggers

Arsenal

Tottenham Hotspur

Leyton Orient

Heritage

Arts and Leisure

One Stop Shop

Go London

What's On Listings

Browse Classifieds

► Interactive

Business Directory

FREE 2009 Calendar

Home Delivery

Place an Advert

Homes

Motors

Jobs

Handy Pages

Dating

Competitions

Submit a Story

Set as Homepage

► Contact Info

Subscriptions

Feedback

Distribution

Leaflets

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Child Sex Ring Cut

THE HEAD of an international child trafficking ring, who smuggled teenage girls into the UK from West Africa, was jailed for six years last week.

Kennedy Johnson, 36, of Maplestead Road, Dagenham, was found guilty of conspiracy to facilitate the entry of dozens of young illegal immigrants at Croydon Crown Court.

He was arrested after an extensive two-year investigation by the UK Border Agency and Serious Organised Crime Agency.

Authorities first became suspicious when a pattern emerged, girls aged 13 to 18 were arriving at London Gatwick from Lagos with false passports.

Johnson is thought to have co-ordinated the influx of over 40 Nigerian teenagers through both Gatwick and Heathrow airports.

Through the investigation he was linked to the girls, who were brought to the UK under false pretences believing they were to become hairdressers or be sent to school.

In fact the youngsters were earmarked for prostitution and would later be moved on to Italy.

Johnson was finally arrested in April last year by Serious Organised Crime Agency officers during an operation in Dagenham.

As a result two girls were taken into care by social services.

Johnson pleaded guilty to people trafficking just days

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 8 T P S L
 8 T P S L
 ME
 »
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before his trial was due to start at Croydon Crown Court.

On Monday August 3 the judge sentenced him to serve six years and described him as playing a "key role" in an international crime ring.

Border authorities across Europe were involved in the two year investigation, arrests have been made in both Holland and Italy as a result.

Regional Director for Border Force, David Holt, said: "This is an excellent result following a complex and comprehensive investigation.

"The prosecution of Kennedy Johnson sends out a clear message that we will actively seek out those involved in the trafficking of young vulnerable girls.

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