

BROTHEL OWNER PLEADS GUILTY ; DOCUMENTS SAY HEALTH CLUB WAS FRONT FOR PROSTITUTION OPERATION

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

A drug problem may put [Angela Moutsatsos] in jail sooner than her April sentencing. U.S. Magistrate Judge Donna Martinez said Moutsatsos has tested positive numerous times for cocaine use while out on bail. Martinez asked defense lawyer Margaret Levy to try to get Moutsatsos into an in-patient treatment facility or she could be detained.

Moutsatsos said she is addicted to cocaine and regularly uses several prescription drugs, including sleeping pills and the pain reliever OxyContin. Levy said Moutsatsos is being treated for a back injury and other medical problems that included cancer. Her doctors hope to wean Moutsatsos off the prescription drugs before she goes to prison.

Moutsatsos traveled to Switzerland between March 2001 and March 2002, records show, to withdraw money from the accounts. Moutsatsos also sent others to Switzerland to make withdrawals. Moutsatsos admitted that she and others conspired to place large sums of cash into mailing containers that were shipped to the U.S.

FULL TEXT

The owner of a legendary Hartford brothel that employed more than 100 prostitutes for more than 4,000 customers pleaded guilty Wednesday to conspiring to promote prostitution, money laundering and smuggling large amounts of cash from Switzerland.

Angela Moutsatsos, 49, of West Hartford, admitted in U.S. District Court in Hartford to being an owner since 2002 of the Alpha Leisure & Health Club Inc., which operated at 156A Franklin Ave. since the 1970s.

Moutsatsos, who was originally named in a 38-count indictment, will forfeit more than \$346,000 and faces a maximum of 30 years in prison and a possible \$1 million fine.

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Assistant U.S. Attorney James Genco said Moutsatsos should be detained immediately because she has broken the law by using cocaine and dealing with drug dealers since her arrest. Martinez is expected to rule on whether Moutsatsos' bail should be revoked on Wednesday.

Moutsatsos worked at the Alpha Club from 1997 until October 2003. The business fronted as a health club offering massages and, from 1998 to 2003, grossed approximately \$5.3 million, according to government records.

Moutsatsos became a principal owner of the business in 2002 with Rebecca M. Arrowood, her accused co-conspirator who also worked there as a supervisor. Arrowood's case is pending.

At a plea hearing Wednesday, Moutsatsos admitted that she and others accepted VISA, MasterCard and other credit cards as payment for prostitution services. Those payments represented a "house fee" of \$40 for 30 minutes, \$50 for 45 minutes and \$60 for one hour," court records show.

The prostitute was then paid a "tip" in an amount at least equal to the house fee, and often more. The credit card payments were processed and deposited in banks in Glastonbury, Hartford, Atlanta, Phoenix and Lewiston, Maine, court records show.

Moutsatsos and her partner controlled more than 100 prostitutes, the government says, by requiring them to adhere to certain procedures and rules of the club. If the prostitutes broke the rules, they were fined, the indictment says. The owners also took the prostitutes' car keys while they worked so that they could not leave without permission, and without paying a fee for performing sexual acts.

Customers also paid a fee for the use of the rooms, lockers and showers.

Moutsatsos said Wednesday that she was responsible for opening the credit card accounts and checking accounts used by the business.

Additionally, Moutsatsos pleaded guilty to paying the bills for the club with the proceeds from prostitution, and putting the money in investment and overseas accounts. At one point, the government says, Moutsatsos and others from the club deposited more than \$1 million in Swiss banks.

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On Wednesday, Moutsatsos pleaded guilty to conspiring to use an "interstate facility," a telephone, to promote prostitution.

Three others pleaded guilty in March 2004 to profiting from the club's operation. Gail Gaer of Newington admitted that she owned and operated the Alpha Club between 1976 and 2002. She pleaded guilty to conspiring to use a telephone to promote prostitution, money laundering and conspiring to smuggle currency into the United States. Reed Jaffe of Rocky Hill also pleaded guilty to conspiring to smuggle currency into the country.

Josephine Ramondetta of Bristol admitted that she worked as a manager and supervisor at the Alpha Club from 1997 to 2003, and pleaded guilty to conspiring to use a telephone to promote prostitution. Gaer, Jaffe and Ramondetta await sentencing.

The investigation was conducted by the FBI, the IRS and vice detectives from the Hartford Police Department.

DETAILS

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