

Spotsylvania Deputies Receive Sex Services in Prostitution Cases

By Tom Jackman
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They enter the massage parlors as undercover detectives. They leave as satisfied customers.

In Spotsylvania County, as part of a campaign by the sheriff's office to root out prostitution in the massage parlor business, detectives have been receiving sexual services from "masseuses." **During several visits to Moon Spa on Plank Road last month, detectives allowed women to perform sexual acts on them on four occasions and once left a \$350 tip, according to court papers.** Spotsylvania Sheriff Howard D. Smith said that the practice is not new and that only unmarried detectives are assigned to such cases. Most prostitutes are careful not to say anything incriminating, so sexual contact is necessary, he said.

"If I thought we could get the conviction without that, we wouldn't allow it," Smith said. "If you want to make them, this has to be done."

But numerous police and legal experts said they were not aware of any law enforcement agency in the Washington region, or the country, that allows sexual contact in prostitution investigations. **Police should not break the law to enforce it,** they said.

Must sex be a part of sex stings?

It's legal in this state, but some experts say it's unethical -- and unnecessary.
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Offended by a masseuse's offer to go beyond routine rubbing into something downright unprintable, the spa customer went to the state police and offered his services: He would take on the role of confidential informant and gather evidence of prostitution at North Whitehall's Shiatsu Spa. **He ended up having sex four times in the name of justice.**

When that fact emerged this week during a Lehigh County Court hearing for one of two spa employees charged with prostitution in the 2006 case, it cast light on a surprisingly common and irony-rich investigative procedure: having civilians pay for sex during crackdowns on sex-for-pay.

The same technique was used in a massage parlor crackdown in August, when state police at Fogelsville repeatedly used an informant to build a case against Hana Massage Therapy in Lower Macungie. A month earlier, Hilltown Township police arrested the owner of the 7 Day Spa after an informant paid \$40 for a sex act.

Defenders of **the practice, which also has been used in Virginia, Tennessee, Arizona and other states,** say it is often necessary to make solid cases against what are essentially brothels in disguise. And with police generally -- though not always -- barred from engaging in sexual behavior during investigations, civilians are the only alternative.