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CLARKE PLEADS GUILTY TO ATTEMPTED MURDER, HUMAN TRAFFICKING

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announces that Zakariya Clarke pleaded guilty to Attempted First-Degree Murder and four counts of Coerce Commercial Sexual Activity for Human Trafficking. Per terms of the plea agreement, Clarke was sentenced to 25 years in Florida State Prison by the Honorable Tatiana Salvador. He is also designated a Sex Offender.

In September 2022, State Attorney's Office investigators who specialize in human trafficking began investigating Clarke for sex trafficking based on evidence uncovered in a previous unrelated case. The State's investigation revealed Clarke used multiple Facebook accounts to communicate with victims he sex trafficked from January to December 2020. Clarke maintained control of his victims through threats of violence and force, and by withholding drugs they were addicted to after he introduced them to the narcotics. On May 8, 2020, Clarke attempted to murder one of the victims who escaped his control. He found out the victim was staying at a Westside motel, went to the business, lured her out of the room, and beat and stabbed her. The victim was initially afraid to provide information to law enforcement for fear of retribution from Clarke, and only did so after continued State efforts.

"This defendant used violence to control his victims while he profited from their suffering. This outcome is an example of great investigative work by our team," said State Attorney Melissa Nelson.

The case was investigated by the State Attorney's Office and was prosecuted by Chief Assistant State Attorney L.E. Hutton.