Beat: Miscellaneous

France to extradite British teacher who ran away with student

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USPA News - A 30-year-old British teacher who was arrested in southwestern France late last month can be extradited to the United Kingdom where he faces allegations of abducting a 15-year-old schoolgirl who was reportedly in love with him, a French court ruled on Thursday. The schoolgirl, whose name is withheld from this report because she is a minor and no longer missing, was reported missing on September 21 after she failed to turn up for class at the Bishop Bell C of E School in Eastbourne, a coastal town in East Sussex, about 83 kilometers (51 miles) southeast of central London.

Her math teacher, 30-year-old Jeremy Forrest from Ringmer, also failed to show up. The pair was found to have boarded a ferry from Dover, England to Calais, France at around 9:30 p.m. on September 20 but the girl had told her parents she was staying with friends. Police said the schoolgirl left with Forrest willingly and was not considered to be in danger, with surveillance photos showing them holding hands and reports indicating they wanted to start a new life in France. The case received intense media coverage in Britain where the age of consent is 16, but French authorities appeared to be less concerned as the age of consent in France is 15 and both had left willingly. Forrest and his student were eventually found in the French city of Bordeaux on September 27, a week after their disappearance, after the teacher was recognized while looking for a new job. Judge Eric Grafmuller, sitting in the Bordeaux Court of Appeal, on Thursday ruled Forrest can be extradited back to Britain under a European arrest warrant which accuses him of child abduction. The math teacher will have to be flown back to Britain within 10 days but this is not expected to happen until at least Monday. After a court hearing earlier this week, Forrest`s UK solicitor Phil Smith said the teacher is looking forward for the "full story" to emerge in the coming months. "He is very appreciative of the support and assistance given to him by his family and in particular his parents," he said. "Naturally, Jeremy is most concerned about the impact of this episode on all those affected." The schoolgirl`s mother had previously described her daughter as being excited when she last saw her before she ran away with Forrest. And a blog posted on Forrest`s website on May 19 talked about trying to deal with a "moral dilemma," although he did not refer to his student or anyone else by name. "And the overiding (sic) question it left me with was this; How do we, and how should we, define what is right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable???" he said. "I came to a few different conclusions, mainly that actually we get a lot of things wrong, but at the end of the day I was satisfied that if you can look yourself in the mirror and know that, under all the front, that you are a good person, that should have faith in your own judgement."

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