

Anti-Trafficking News Bulletin

ATTORNEY GENERAL ISSUES FIRST ANNUAL REPORT ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING



On May 18, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced the first annual *Report to Congress on U.S. Government Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons*. The report, mandated by The 2003 Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, provides information on the government's activities to combat trafficking in persons.

The Bush Administration has made fighting human trafficking a significant priority. Since FY 2001, the Justice Department has charged 149 human traffickers, more than a three-fold increase over the previous three years. Over the same time-frame, the Justice Department has initiated 287 new trafficking investigations, nearly triple the number opened in the comparable prior three year period.

"The Justice Department is committed to aggressive, swift prosecutions of the predators engaged in human trafficking abuses," said Attorney General John Ashcroft. "Human trafficking robs victims of their freedom and their basic human rights. The crimes outlined in this report offend the principle of freedom used to establish our nation. Today's report serves as a review of the great strides we are taking to combat trafficking but also serves as a somber reminder that there is still much work to do to eradicate this evil."

The report, covering FY 2003, provides information on a variety of law enforcement efforts to address the problem of human trafficking including: the Justice Department's prosecutorial efforts; the number of victims granted non-immigrant T-visa status; the amount of international grants distributed; and the type of international anti-trafficking training provided. Log onto www.usdoj.gov/trafficking.htm for a copy of the report and for more detailed information on the Department's efforts to combat trafficking.

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"Look Beneath The Surface" Poster

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ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE ANTI-TRAFFICKING TASK FORCES

During National Crime Victims Awareness Week (April 17-21) three United States Attorneys joined the Civil Rights Division in announcing Anti-Trafficking Task Forces located in Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Phoenix. The task forces reflect a pioneering partnership forged between the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Homeland Security, victim services providers, local law enforcement, and faith-based organizations. A similar task force is planned for Tampa, Florida, beginning in early June.

General for Civil Rights, R. Alexander Acosta, who initiated the task forces. "These task forces reflect our commitment to bringing the war to the traffickers by initiating proactive investigations, rescues of victims and prosecutions."

In Philadelphia, U.S. Attorney Patrick Meehan assembled a diverse group of leaders and law enforcement officials for a day of training and a public announcement of the new effort. Similar announcements and training sessions occurred in Phoenix and Atlanta.

"This unprecedented effort builds on prior successes and the lessons we've learned in the war on trafficking," said Assistant Attorney

"Trafficking seems like a barbaric crime from centuries past, but it continues to claim thousands of victims in the United States alone," Meehan told the group assembled in Philadelphia.

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The coercion and threats of violence used by traffickers against those held in abusive situations often prevent victims from coming forward.

Human trafficking thrives in the shadows. In order to bring attention to the problem, the new federal effort includes a high profile public awareness campaign.

The campaign, known as “Rescue and Restore,” was designed by the Department of Health and Human Services, and focuses its efforts on communicating with community organizations, police officers, health care providers and others who might come into contact with victims.

These members of the community will be armed with information that help them recognize signs of trafficking. Additionally, authorities have established a 24-hour hotline number that citizens can call to report such signs to federal authorities.

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-R. Alexander Acosta

This new tool will promote rescues, identify services for victims, and alert law enforcement.

“Human traffickers systematically terrorize their victims, who all too often come from countries where public corruption undermines trust of authorities. We certainly cannot expect these victims to pick up the phone and call the FBI,” said Acosta. “The new hotline will open a vital line of communication between federal authorities and those in local communities who can best speak out for the victims of trafficking.”

Announcing the federal effort in Phoenix, Scott Webber of the Department of Homeland Security underscored the importance of reaching out to victims who often feel too afraid or ashamed to come forward. Without the cooperation of victims, successful prosecution of traffickers becomes immeasurably more difficult.

“No case can be successfully prosecuted without the assistance of the victims themselves,” said Paul Charlton, U.S. Attorney from Phoenix, who emphasized his commitment to reaching out to Hispanic communities in particular while addressing the crowd in both English and Spanish.

The Civil Rights Division has pioneered a victim-centered approach to ensure the successful cooperation between trafficking victims and prosecutors, the kind of cooperation that can help put traffickers behind bars. The approach concentrates on providing services and security for victims and, in some cases, their families. The new task forces will embrace this approach by seeking restoration for victims as a first priority. The restoration efforts will draw on the strengths of service providers, who often have deep roots in local communities.

Rev. Jan Olav Flaaten of Arizonans to Protect Exploited Children and Adults spoke at the Phoenix announcement and discussed the role her organization would play in the efforts. “We hope to provide victims with self respect, healing, and the ability to start life again,” she said.

In Atlanta, the announcement featured a diverse group of participants who addressed the different challenges associated with urban trafficking, rural trafficking, sex slavery, and involuntary farm servitude. The U. S. Attorney in Atlanta, William Duffey, welcomed the new federal initiative, which he characterized as providing prosecutors in the field with the right tools to aggressively move against the inhuman cruelty of trafficking.

“Several weeks ago we presented charges against defendants who were trafficking young girls from Mexico into our district. It is a case of significant human tragedy and we are resolved to attack these crimes aggressively to stop those who put others in bondage,” Duffey said. “It is a unique partnership between the Department of Justice, Health and Human Services and private organizations. To work together is the right strategy and it is at the right time. We are pleased to play a lead role in this initiative.”

Assistant Attorney General Acosta announced that similar efforts are planned for additional cities. “These partnerships will gain expertise and will develop ways rescue and identify victims that will improve our ability to investigate large organized crime trafficking networks that operate in multiple cities within the U.S. and recruit victims from several countries,” Acosta said. “We are pleased at the response from all members of the partnerships but we are especially encouraged that within days of the announcements in April we began to receive phone calls about possible victimizations.”



CHECK IT OUT

The “Look Beneath the Surface” poster on Page 3, encourages law enforcement officers to look for signs of trafficking while doing their duty. The poster, designed by the Department of Health and Human Services, is part of a new public awareness and education effort. This poster and other materials are available on the web at www.acs.hhs.gov/trafficking.

LOOK BENEATH THE SURFACE

Human Trafficking is Modern-Day Slavery

The next prostitute, stripper, illegal immigrant, runaway youth, domestic servant, or migrant worker you encounter or take into custody may be a victim of human trafficking.

Helping trafficking victims can help you shut down the real criminals. And there are services available to victims who assist in your prosecution.

Call 1.888.3737.888
to shut the traffickers down for good.

For more information about human trafficking visit www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking.



WHY TRAFFICKING REQUIRES A TASK FORCE APPROACH

All those who work to combat the global challenge of human trafficking quickly sense the limited power of one person or one agency working alone. Imagine how lost and powerless a victim of human trafficking must feel. Approaching authorities and knowing where to go for help can prove daunting to anyone, but it must be especially daunting for victims from countries where victim services are rarely available and public corruption is rampant.

Many victims do not know how to come to us, and we in Washington cannot know where to find all victims. For this reason, we must reach out to all individuals who can help us find the victims and pursue their tormentors. It may be, for instance, that an abused migrant farm worker from Mexico will only trust his parish priest. Or, a health care worker giving shots to children may notice that something is wrong with the way parents are being treated at work.

Services providers help restore trust and dignity to victims. Building from this, victims can find the strength to confront their tormentors. Although prosecutors and investigators often pursue their work with notable compassion, they simply cannot provide the kind of support to victims that dedicated care providers can. Working together, care providers, prosecutors and investigators can compliment each other's strengths and become much more effective.

The spirit of cooperation that has developed between each component of our anti-trafficking team reflects our national character as a compassionate and resolute people. Those who participated in the announcement of our first three anti-trafficking task forces had the good fortune to see this spirit in action. Some investigators met services providers for the first time and together they spoke hopefully of seeing a case brought successfully to trial. Prosecutors reported that they regard helping a victim into restorative care as itself a victory, even when there is not enough evidence to identify all of the perpetrators.

Trafficking is a dynamic crime. The traffickers will continue to adapt, and we must be ready to meet each new challenge that presents itself. As I see the anti-trafficking effort moving forward, I am continually impressed by the hard work and adaptability of the men and women on the front lines. They remain, as they must, willing to learn every day.

We must continue in our resolve to build bridges and alliances. We must reach out to those who can help with our struggle both in our own communities and around the world. Only through our combined efforts will we be able to successfully vanquish this insidious evil from existence.

- R. Alexander Acosta

CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION AND MIAMI U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE HOST STATE, LOCAL, AND FEDERAL AGENTS

On May 11 and 12, the Civil Rights Division and the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida hosted a two-day training session for state, local, and federal law enforcement officials in Miami. The training is the first step toward establishing a multi-jurisdictional task force in the Miami area.

Professor Terry Coonan, the Executive Director of the Center for the Advancement of Human Rights at Florida State University, set the stage by discussing the trafficking problem in Florida. Prof. Coonan, who recently published an in-depth study of trafficking cases in Florida, also addressed state legislative activities related to trafficking.

Special Litigation Counsel Lou de Baca and Trial Attorneys Susan French and Andrew Huang, all of the Civil Rights Division, focused their presentations on lessons learned from trafficking prosecutions that the Division has brought in recent years in South Florida. Notable cases include the Cadena sex slavery case, the Tecum domestic servitude case, and the Ramos migrant worker slavery case.

Non-governmental organizations also offered their perspective on the role played by victim service providers. Their presentations covered topics ranging from providing services to traumatized victims, to communicating effectively with law enforcement.

Organizations represented at the training session included the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, the Florida Freedom Partnership, the Miami/Dade Victim Services Center, the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, and Victim Services for Traumatized Survivors.

Ed Geiger from the FBI's Civil Rights Unit, and Lt. Bill Rule of the Collier County Sheriff's Office discussed their experiences identifying and investigating trafficking cases.

Participants worked through interactive exercises with hypothetical case scenarios and police reports to sharpen their ability to recognize and respond to trafficking allegations, including through proactive investigative measures.



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN NOTABLE PROSECUTIONS

United States v. Valle-Maldonado

On April 8, a federal grand jury returned a 28 count indictment in *United States v. Valle-Maldonado, et al.* (C.D. Cal.), charging defendants Jenny Valle-Maldonado and Javier Sandoval-Garcia, Jose Velasquez-Garcia and Juan Gregorio Martinez-Vasquez with various sex trafficking related offenses. Between August 2003 and March 2004, the defendants arranged for women, including two minors, to be smuggled into the United States from Mexico. Once in the country, the defendants forced them to perform commercial sex acts, both at the defendants' homes and at massage parlors throughout the Los Angeles area. Valle-Maldonado threatened some of the women that if they refused to obey her, Valle-Maldonado's sister in Mexico would harm the victims' relatives in Mexico.

United States v. Gates and Heyward

On April 23, a 36-count indictment was returned in Washington, DC, charging defendants Gary Gates and Tamisha Heyward with multiple counts of sex trafficking and other related offenses. The defendants were charged with operating a sex-trafficking ring from their home via the Internet, forcing girls as young as 14 to perform sexual acts. Defendant Gates allegedly beat the girls and women who disobeyed him. He also sexually assaulted many of the women and provided drugs to support some of the women's addictions. On May 13, defendant Tamisha Heyward entered a plea of guilty to the sex-trafficking charge.

United States v. Reyes-Rojas

On May 6, in Atlanta, Georgia, defendant Juan Rojas entered a guilty plea to violating two counts of sex trafficking. Co-defendants Jose and Raul Reyes Rojas remain charged with conspiracy, sex trafficking, importing and harboring aliens for the purpose of commercial sexual activity, and alien smuggling. The indictment alleges that the defendants smuggled young girls from Mexico into the United States and forced them to perform multiple commercial sex acts.

court in New Jersey ordered several convicted human traffickers to pay a total of \$135,240 to four young Mexican girls previously held in captivity in a Plainfield, New Jersey brothel. The defendants lured the girls, some as young as 14, from their homes in Mexico with promises of work, marriage, and a better life in America. Instead, they confined the girls to the Plainfield brothel where they forced them to engage in repeated sex acts. The defendants strengthened their hold on the victims through isolation, beatings, threats and psychological coercion. The defendants held all four girls at the brothel until February 2002, when local authorities raided the building. Their periods of captivity ranged from seven to 15 months. Five of six convicted defendants have been sentenced to up to 210 months in prison.

United States v. Wild and Gutierrez

On May 5, in the Western District of Oklahoma, defendant Shannon Marie Wild was sentenced to 121 months in prison to be followed by three years supervised release. On January 16, Wild was convicted on charges of violating four counts of 18 U.S.C. 2423(a) (transportation of a minor for illegal sexual activity) and one count of 18 U.S.C. 1591(a)(2) (sex trafficking of a minor). Co-defendant Constantino Guterrez, Jr., is awaiting trial on charges of violating one count of §1591(a)(2). The defendants transported three young girls (ages 14 to 17) across state lines to Dallas, Texas, to prostitute them, then use the proceeds to finance their drug habit and to pay the rent.

United States v. Carreto-Reyes

On May 4, a federal grand jury returned a four count indictment in the Eastern District of New York (Brooklyn) charging defendant Eloy Carreto Reyes with violating two counts of 8 U.S.C. §1324 (transporting aliens), one count of racketeering pursuant to 18 U.S.C. 1952(a)(3), and one count of 18 U.S.C §2421 (Mann Act violation). On February 19, defendants Josue Flores Carreto, Gerardo Flores Carreto, Daniel Perez Alonzo, and Eliu Carreto Fernandez were charged with these same violations. These cases involve allegations that the defendants organized and operated a trafficking ring that smuggled five Mexican women into the United States illegally and forced them to commit commercial sexual acts in Queens and Brooklyn, New York City.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN NOTABLE PROSECUTIONS (cont'd)

United States v. Ramos

On May 3, in Fort Pierce, Florida, defendant Juan Ramos was re-sentenced to 180 months in prison to be followed by 3 years supervised release and a \$20,000 fine. On March 1, his co-defendant and brother Ramiro Ramos received the exact same sentence. The Ramos brothers were Florida citrus contractors who operated labor contracting businesses that supplied migrant farm laborers to citrus industry growers. On June 28, 2002, following a trial that spanned four weeks, a jury found defendants Ramiro and Juan Ramos guilty of conspiring to hold workers in involuntary servitude and harboring undocumented workers. The jury also determined certain real and personal property, and over \$3 million in proceeds to be forfeitable. Originally, the defendants and their co-defendant cousin, Jose Ramos, were also convicted of extortion and firearm charges, and sentenced in November 2002. Following sentencing, however, the Supreme Court rendered its decision in Scheidler v. National Organization for Women, Inc., 537 U. S. 393 (2003), which vitiated the legal basis for the extortion and firearms charges. The Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit dismissed those additional charges and remanded the case against Juan Ramos and Ramiro Ramos to the District Court for re-sentencing.



(Above) One of the vans that Ramos brothers attacked to prevent drivers from helping enslaved migrant workers escape.

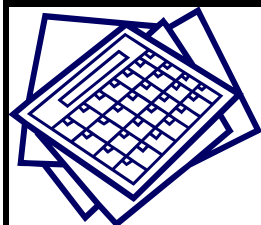
United States v. Trisanti

On May 10, 2004, a second defendant pleaded guilty to having harbored and abused an undocumented woman from Indonesia. Beginning in 1996, defendant Herri Nasution and his wife, Mariska Trisanti, arranged to bring a young Indonesian woman to Los Angeles on a tourist visa. They told the woman that she would work for the couple for two years as a nanny and housekeeper. When the victim arrived in the United States, however, Trisanti confiscated her passport and through threats and physical abuse, forced her to work for 17 hours or more per day, seven days a week. The victim re-

ceived virtually no compensation for her labor after the first year of her employment. Earlier, on March 25, 2004, Mariska Trisanti pleaded guilty to holding another domestic servant during the same time period in a condition of involuntary servitude. Trisanti had compelled both victims' labor through repeated threats and physical abuse. Trisanti threatened that if the victims attempted to escape, they would be arrested and put in jail. Sentencing for Nasution is scheduled for August 16. Sentencing for Trisanti is scheduled to occur on July 12.

FEATURED NEXT MONTH:

JUNE



- Civil Rights Division Approach Serves As Model For Other Countries
- U.S. Assessment Reports Progress Yet Much Remains To Be Done