



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

STATEMENT

OF

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REGARDING A HEARING ON

**“COMBATING MODERN SLAVERY:
REAUTHORIZATION OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING PROGRAMS”**

BEFORE THE

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON THE
JUDICIARY

October 31, 2007 – 2:00 p.m.
2141 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C.

Good afternoon, Chairman Conyers, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Committee. Before making my opening remarks, I would like to play a Human Trafficking public service announcement developed by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Let me take you back to the early hours of a June morning in 2004. On that morning, ICE agents executed search warrants at three seemingly middle class bungalows in suburban New York. What they found was one of the most horrific cases of human trafficking and slavery in recent U.S. history.

Inside those homes were 69 Peruvians - including 13 children - being held in filthy, overcrowded and unsanitary conditions forced to work in janitorial and factory occupations. These people were brought to the United States by a couple who identified their victims in Peru and provided them false documents and helped them enter the United States.

Fortunately, the victims in this case were rescued and the lead defendant was sentenced to 15 years in a federal prison. After the enforcement action, ICE worked in concert with Department of Health and Human Services and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) resulting in the identification of 25 additional trafficking victims.

It is my privilege to appear before you today to discuss ICE's comprehensive efforts against human traffickers who exploit women, children and men - a form of modern day slavery. I am proud to represent a federal law enforcement agency that has a leadership role in investigating human trafficking crimes and bringing perpetrators of these human rights abuses to justice.

ICE integrates immigration and customs authorities to investigate criminal organizations on multiple fronts, and in doing so, is able identify, disrupt, and dismantle organizations. The most critical piece of legislation supporting our efforts in fighting human trafficking is the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) and the tenets of Prevention, Protection and Prosecution.

Trafficking is big business for organized criminal syndicates as well as informal networks and individuals who seek to gain profit from the exploitation of others. Slavery has taken on countless and more hidden forms of exploitation in modern society. In the seven years since the passage of the TVPA, law enforcement has learned to look for trafficking not only in urban high crime areas in the form of street prostitution, but also in our rural agricultural sectors and in private homes in affluent neighborhoods. We know that adult men and women are victimized along with children, and that our own citizens can fall prey to traffickers when they are vulnerable. We at ICE make every effort to not only find and rescue victims, but target and cripple the financial motivations and infrastructure that allow human trafficking organizations to thrive.

Let me take this opportunity to highlight ICE investigative efforts and successes in combating human trafficking. In fiscal years 2006 and 2007, ICE initiated 652 human trafficking investigations, an increase of over 21% from the previous two years. During the same period, ICE investigative efforts resulted in 341 arrests, 230 indictments, and 190 convictions related to human trafficking. Examples of the success include:

- Several weeks ago, our ICE office in Newark rescued 21 West African victims of labor trafficking – 14 women and 7 juveniles – the youngest was 12 years old. Based on

information provided by one of the victims, ICE was able to identify and rescue additional victims in three separate locations, resulting in 22 victims identified and rescued in this case. Three traffickers were arrested and jailed. It is a sobering thought to consider that if law enforcement had not been contacted in the recent African case, the remaining 21 victims might not have been rescued.

- In a Special Agent in Charge (SAC), New York case based on a referral from our ICE Attaché office in Mexico City, ICE was able to locate and rescue several victims involved in sex trafficking. This investigation resulted in the sentencing of each of the two primary defendants to 50 years incarceration, which is the longest sentence since the enactment of the TVPA.

Given the international scope of human trafficking, ICE has an established global reach that has allowed us to foster strong international relationships through over 50 offices overseas located in 39 countries to fully identify and pursue criminal organizations. In order to fully address the harm inflicted by these organizations, our investigations begin in the source countries where trafficking begins, continue into transit countries and conclude at the destination countries.

As the law enforcement agency at the forefront of the U.S. Government's response to human international trafficking, ICE conducts global investigations identifying and rescuing victims, has a prominent role on several cabinet level working groups, and leads the intelligence gathering and sharing effort through the Directorship of the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center (HSTC). The HSTC serves as a fusion center for intelligence, law enforcement and other information to enhance coordination and communication among U.S. government

agencies combating human traffickers, smugglers, and criminals facilitating terrorist travel. Our victim witness coordinators also work closely with the Department of Health and Human Services' grantees, contractors and coalitions in the provision of services for rescued victims.

Human trafficking cases require law enforcement agencies to be victim-oriented. ICE has trained and deployed over 300 victim-witness coordinators. The testimony of victims is critical to successful prosecutions. Victims are our best evidence of the crime – yet a victim should not – and cannot -- be treated as simply a piece of evidence. While we know that the long-term care of victims is and should be in the hands of NGOs, we in law enforcement also have a responsibility to treat victims fairly, with compassion, and with attention to their needs. ICE, in conjunction with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), are the sole agencies charged with providing short-term immigration relief, which is called “Continued Presence” and allows certified victims of trafficking to remain in the United States. In each of the cases cited, we granted the victims Continued Presence, which is part of our “victim-centered approach”. Continued Presence or the award of a T-visa allows the Department of Health and Human Services to “certify” victims so that they can access federal benefits and services to the same extent as refugees.

This year, under an ICE initiative titled ICE TIPS, ICE offices were required to conduct outreach to law enforcement agencies and NGOs to expand awareness of trafficking cases. ICE domestic field offices and ICE Attaché offices overseas provided training to over 9000 staff from 323 NGOs and over 7000 foreign law enforcement personnel from 867 agencies worldwide. ICE has also established a toll free tip number line for reporting human trafficking leads, as well as developed outreach materials for law enforcement and NGOs. These

materials include brochures, a training video and laminated wallet-size cards with human trafficking indicators, available in five different languages.

ICE is committed to dedicating the resources necessary to make human trafficking a crime of the past. Thank you for inviting me and I will be glad to answer any questions you may have at this time.