

Anti-Trafficking News Bulletin

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH DELIVERS KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT FIRST NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING CONFERENCE

On July 16-18, President George W. Bush, Attorney General John Ashcroft, Florida Governor Jeb Bush, and other top federal and state officials, joined law enforcement officers and human services providers to condemn the evil of modern day slavery -- human trafficking.

Speaking before the First National Conference on Trafficking, President George W. Bush renewed his pledge to fight the barbaric crime of trafficking "at home and abroad." He delivered encouragement, and the nation's thanks, to those who fight on the front lines in the struggle against the traffickers.

"The lives of tens of thousands of innocent women and children depend on your compassion, they depend upon your determination, and they depend upon your daily efforts to rescue them from misery and servitude," President Bush told the conference attendees. "You are in a fight against evil, and the American people are grateful for your dedication and service."

"The trade in human beings brings suffering to the innocent and shame to our country, and we will lead the fight against it," President Bush added. (See the President's Remarks on page 2.)

The conference trained participants from across the country in anti-trafficking approaches so that they could return to their communities with the skills necessary to form effective anti-trafficking task forces. These task forces will include federal prosecutors and investigators, local law enforcement, and services providers from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The three-day conference, held in Tampa, brought together law enforcement agents, human services providers, and senior administration officials. The event focused nationwide attention to the evils of human trafficking and provided

hundreds of attendees with intensive training in groundbreaking approaches to anti-human trafficking enforcement.

Attorney General John Ashcroft made clear that a potent anti-trafficking strategy requires strong partnerships.

"Our ability to investigate these heinous crimes, safeguard the victims, and prosecute the traffickers would not be possible were it not for the federal, state and local partnerships forged between law enforcement, prosecutors, and NGOs," he told the conference. "It is critical that we be able to work together to track down those who hide their barbaric businesses in the shadows, and to help their victims. No one knows a community better than the law enforcement and outreach organizations that are based there."

The Attorney General also announced \$14 million in funding to assist the state and local components and services providers that will participate in anti-trafficking task forces. (See the Attorney General's remarks on page 6.)

The conference highlighted the proactive approach to trafficking investigations pioneered by the Civil Rights Division. Because the terrorized victims of trafficking rarely reach out to authorities themselves, law enforcement officials must work aggressively to find the victims, rescue them, and connect them with victims' services providers who can help restore their lives and dignity. This "victim-centered" approach brings much needed relief to victims and lays the groundwork for successful prosecutions of what President Bush called "one of the worst offences against human dignity".



President George W. Bush, Attorney General John Ashcroft, and Florida Governor Jeb Bush were among the participants in the first National Conference on Human Trafficking.

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Senate Adopts Anti-Trafficking Resolution

On July 21, the United States Senate unanimously approved an anti-human trafficking resolution authored by Texas Senator John Cornyn. The resolution supported the Justice Department's recent efforts to combat human trafficking and specifically singled out the work of the Civil Rights Division for praise. It also lauded the National Conference on Human Trafficking and other efforts of the federal government and its state,

local and non-governmental partners. The resolution also encouraged states to consider adopting comprehensive anti-trafficking laws. Presently, only a handful of states have such statutes.

A copy of the resolution, S.R. 414, is available at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c108:S.RES.414>:

President Bush Calls for an End to Trafficking at Home and Abroad

On July 16, President George W. Bush addressed the National Conference on Human Trafficking in Tampa, Florida. What follows is a transcript of his remarks as delivered.

Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks a lot, John, for your service and your kind introduction. It's always good to be with Jeb. (Laughter.) He's a great brother and a fine governor. (Applause.) And I know my daughter, Barbara, who is traveling with me today, is proud of her Uncle Jeb. Thanks for coming, Barbara. We're glad you're here. (Applause.)

I appreciate you inviting me to this important conference. Human trafficking is one of the worst offenses against human dignity. Our nation is determined to fight that crime abroad and at home. And that's what we're here to talk about today. I am especially pleased that Jeb has today signed into law a bill making the sexual trafficking of minors a felony in the state of Florida. I appreciate his leadership. (Applause.)

I want to thank Claude Allen, the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services for joining us today. Hey, Claude. Thank you for coming. (Applause.)

Paula Dobriansky, who is the Under Secretary of the Department of State, thank you, Paula, for your dedicated service. (Applause.)

Asa Hutchinson is the Under Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. Thanks -- (applause).

In order to make sure the federal laws we're going to discuss are enforced, you've got to have good, strong U.S. attorneys around the United States. Paul Perez is a strong U.S. Attorney here in Tampa. Paul, thank you for being here. I appreciate your coming. (Applause.)

I want to thank all the state and local folks who are here, the local officials and the local law enforcement officials. I appreciate the faith-based and community organizations who are here. Thanks for your compassion and your love.

I met Lawn Pham today when I got to the airport. Where are you, Lawn? Oh, there she is. You'd have thought you'd have got a better seat than that. But there she is. (Laughter.)

The reason why Lawn came out to greet me at Air Force One is she volunteers five days a week at Catholic Charities. She is a soldier in the Army of Compassion. She is a reminder that the greatest strength of this country is the heart and souls of our fellow citizens, people who are willing to help people who hurt. Lawn is such an example. She is involved with the rescuing of innocent victims that have been brought here and have been harmed.

You know, the great strength of America is the fact that we've got millions of our fellow citizens who heed a call to love their neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. And Lawn is such a person. (Applause.)

I am honored to be with the courageous men and women who are serving on the front lines in the fight against human trafficking. You've got a tough job, but it's a necessary job. You're hunting down the traffickers, you're serving justice by putting them behind bars, you're liberating captives, and you're helping them recover from years of abuse and trauma. The lives of tens of thousands of innocent women and children depend on your compassion, they depend upon your determination, and they depend upon your daily efforts to rescue them from misery and servitude. You are in a fight against evil, and the American people are grateful for your dedication and service. (Applause.)

Human life is the gift of our Creator -- and it should never be for sale. (Applause.) It takes a special kind of depravity to exploit and hurt the most vulnerable members of society. Human traffickers rob children of their innocence, they expose them to the worst of life before they have seen much of life. Traffickers tear families apart. They treat their victims as nothing more than goods and commodities for sale to the highest bidder.



President George W. Bush addresses the National Conference on Human Trafficking in Tampa, Florida.

President Bush Calls for an End to Trafficking at Home and Abroad, continued from Page 2

Worldwide, at least 600,000 to 800,000 human beings are trafficked across international borders each year. Of those, it is believed that more than 80 percent are women and girls, and that 70 percent of them were forced into sexual servitude. The United Nations believes that the trafficking of human beings is now the third largest source of money for organized crime, after arms and drugs. We've got a problem; we need to do something about it. (Applause.)

“Since taking office, my administration has provided more than \$295 million to support anti-trafficking programs in more than 120 countries.”

The American government has a particular duty, because human trafficking is an affront to the defining promise of our country. People come to America hoping for a better life. And it is a terrible tragedy when anyone comes here, only to be forced into a sweatshop, domestic servitude, pornography or prostitution. It is estimated that between 14,500 and 17,500 victims of trafficking cross our borders every year.

U.S. law enforcement has documented cases of Latvian girls trafficked into sexual slavery in Chicago, or Ukrainian girls trafficked in Los Angeles, and Maryland, or Thai, Korean, Malaysian and Vietnamese girls trafficked in Georgia, or and Mexican girls trafficked in California, New Jersey and here in Florida. Many of the victims are teenagers, some as young as 12 years old. Many victims are beaten. Some are killed. Others die spiritual and emotional deaths, convinced after years of abuse that their lives have no worth. This trade in human beings brings suffering to the innocent and shame to our country, and we will lead the fight against it. (Applause.)

Last year, at the United Nations, I called on other governments to pass laws making such abuse a crime -- and many have risen to the challenge. In the past year, 24 nations have enacted new laws to combat trade in human lives. Thirty-two are now in the process of drafting or passing such laws. As a result of these efforts, last year nearly 8,000 traffickers were prosecuted worldwide, 2,800 have been convicted.

America is actively helping nations that are willing to engage in this fight. Since taking office, my administration has provided more than \$295 million to support anti-trafficking programs in more than 120 countries. (Applause.) We're taking the lead. We are helping other governments to develop laws to combat abuse, to create special law enforcement units to investigate trafficking cases and rescue victims, build emergency shelters, and develop long-term rehabilitation and vocational training programs.

At the U.N. last year, I pledged \$50 million to support these efforts in 2004. Today, the Department of State as announced it has identified the final \$25 million to meet that pledge -- (applause) -- funds that will support anti-trafficking programs in Brazil and Cambodia and India and Indonesia and Mexico, Moldova, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. Every nation that fights human trafficking has a friend in the United States. And it's important for them to know that.

America is also confronting nations that profit from or tolerate human trafficking. We are helping nations and we are confronting nations. Those countries face potential sanctions that include the loss of U.S. military and economic assistance, as well as the loss of support from the World Bank and the IMF. This approach is yielding results.

Last year, after the Department of State released its 2003 Trafficking in Persons Report, 10 nations avoided sanctions by moving quickly to pass new anti-trafficking legislation, to train police officers. They launched domestic information campaigns, and established victim protection programs. This year, we have created a "Special Watch List" of 42 problem countries that require scrutiny. Every nation that is complicit in human trafficking can know that the United States government is watching and there will be consequences if they don't act.

As we fight the trade in human beings abroad, we have also launched an unprecedented domestic effort to deal with this problem at home. Our approach combines aggressive law enforcement action -- that means putting people in jail -- with compassionate outreach to the victims. (Applause.) Over the past three years, we have more than doubled the number of new trafficking investigations underway. Last August, for example, a Federal District Court in New Jersey sentenced two women to 17-and-a-half years in prison -- the maximum time allowable -- for bringing four Mexican girls into the United States and forcing them into prostitution in Plainfield, New Jersey -- 17-and-a-half years of hard time. The message to traffickers is becoming clear: If we catch you, you're going to spend time in jail. (Applause.)

“This year, the Department of Justice under General Ashcroft's lead successfully prosecuted the largest human trafficking case in U.S. history...”

This year, the Department of Justice under General Ashcroft's lead successfully prosecuted the largest human trafficking case in U.S. history, convicting the ringleader of a criminal gang that had smuggled more than 200 Vietnamese and Chinese nationals to work as slave laborers in a garment factory on American Samoa.

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President Bush Calls for an End to Trafficking at Home and Abroad, continued from Page 3

Since 2001, we've charged 110 traffickers. That's triple the number charged in the previous three years. We're beginning to make good, substantial progress. The message is getting out: We're serious. And when we catch you, you'll find out we're serious. We're staying on the hunt. (Applause.)

We're also taking unprecedented action to help the victims, and that's a really important part of the strategy. One of the ways traffickers keep women and girls enslaved is by telling them they will be

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arrested and deported if they try and run a way. We're removing that tool of coercion by treating the victims of trafficking not as illegal aliens but as refugees. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act carried a special class of visas called T-Visas that allowed trafficking victims to remain in the United States and receive the same services and counseling that are provided to refugees.

Often, these women have been terribly brutalized. And when they escape from their nightmare, they should find the protection and generous heart of America. (Applause.)

So we're calling upon and rallying the armies of compassion in our society to help. Since taking office, this administration has provided \$35 million in grants to 36 local groups that are helping those who have suffered at the hands of traffickers. We're using federal monies to help spread compassion.

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Today, the Justice Department is awarding \$4.5 million to nine organizations that are running shelters where victims can take refuge while they seek further help. This is a good and proper use of federal taxpayers' money. Earlier this year, the Department of Health and Human Services helped Covenant House establish a nationwide, toll-free, 24-hour hotline to report incidents of trafficking. Victims and those who know about their plight can call 1-888-373-7888. Spread the word. One speech alone is not going to get the number out. (Laughter.)

America will not tolerate slave traders who bring women and children into our country for abuse. We will not tolerate American citizens abusing innocent children abroad. Sex tourism is an estimated billion dollar a year business worldwide. No American should have any part of it. We're working with governments in Southeast Asia to crack down on pedophile sex tourism -- and many nations in that region have made substantial progress.

We also face a problem only 90 miles off our shores, where the regime of Fidel Castro has turned Cuba into a major destination for sex tourism. A recent study by the Protection Project at Johns Hopkins University found that Cuba has "replaced Southeast Asia as a destination for pedophiles and sex tourists." As restrictions on travel to Cuba were eased during the

1990s, the study found an influx of American and Canadian tourists contributed to a sharp increase in child prostitution in Cuba."

The regime in Havana, already one of the worst violators of human rights in the world, is adding to its crimes. The dictator welcomes sex tourism. Here's how he bragged about the industry. This is his quote, "Cuba has the cleanest and most educated prostitutes in the world." He said that because sex tourism is a vital source of hard currency to keep his corrupt government afloat. My administration is working toward a comprehensive solution of this problem: The rapid, peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba. (Applause.) We have put a strategy in place to hasten the day when no Cuban child is exploited to finance a failed revolution and every Cuban citizen will live in freedom. (Applause.)

We have taken action to stop American tourists from participating in the sexual abuse of children in Cuba or anywhere else in the world. (Applause.) In 2003, I

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signed the Protect Act, which allows U.S. law enforcement to prosecute Americans who travel abroad and engage in sex with minors without having to prove prior intent. The Protect Act expands the statute of limitations to the life of the victim for crimes involving the abduction and physical or sexual abuse of children in virtually all cases. The Protect Act imposes strict new penalties, doubling the maximum sentence for U.S. citizens who travel to foreign countries to sexually abuse children. We've also launched information campaigns in foreign countries to inform American travelers of penalties back home for sexually exploiting children abroad.

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Stopping this abuse requires going after the criminal gangs who supply the sexual predators. But we cannot put them out of business until and unless we deal with the problem of demand. (Applause.) And so that's why we are going after the unscrupulous adults who prey on the young and the innocent. Last summer the Department of Homeland Security launched Operation Predator, a comprehensive effort to protect children from international sex tourists and traffickers and pornography and prostitution rings. That's why Asa Hutchinson is here. This operation has resulted in more than 3,200 arrests nationwide. I appreciate the good work of all the men and women at every level of government who are working hard to protect women and children and bringing the predators to justice. I told you earlier, it takes hard work. I know it does. There's a lot of people working long hours to enforce the law, and therefore, make our society a more compassionate place.

All the steps I've outlined today are important, yet, the success will depend on the courage of those individuals, people like Anna Rodriguez. Where are you, Anna? Yes, thanks for coming. She is a victim advocate. I think some of you might have met her earlier today. A few years ago, Anna was working for the Collier County Sheriff's Department when she was called to what appeared to be a routine domestic violence call. Upon arriving at the scene, she noticed a 19-year-old woman named Maria crying quietly in the corner of the apartment. After some coaxing, Maria told Anna Rodriguez her story.

She had been kidnapped from her family in Guatemala. She had been smuggled into the United States. She was being kept as a slave. She was forced to work without pay in the tomato fields of central Florida and then raped at night.

At first, Anna was told by her superiors there was nothing she could do for Maria except turn her case over to

the INS. She didn't give up. Anna Rodriguez obviously has a huge heart. Thanks to her persistence, Maria was rescued and her captor is now in prison. (Applause.)

Maria became the first adult recipient of the new T-Visa created under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Because a good law passed, she remains in the U.S. and is working to rebuild her life with the continuing support of her friend, Anna Rodriguez.

I hope out of this conference comes a determination to stand behind the Anna Rodriguezes and the thousands of other dedicated police officers, prosecutors, social workers, local officials who stand on the -- side-by-side with the victims of human trafficking every single day, who want to rescue them in the name of a compassionate America.

“This is more than a criminal justice matter. It's a struggle for the lives and dignity of innocent women and children.”

We're working to make sure you have the support you need in Washington, D.C. -- you've got a governor who's supporting you here in Florida -- because of the struggle against human trafficking is more than a fight against crime. This is more than a criminal justice matter. It's a struggle for the lives and dignity of innocent women and children. And that's why all of us must be dedicated to -- to the strategies that will enable us to prevail.

I want to thank you for giving me a chance to come by and talk about this important subject. Again, I thank you for your work of compassion and decency.

God bless. (Applause.)

Attorney General Details Anti-Trafficking Accomplishments Announces \$14 Million Grant Program

On July 16, Attorney General John Ashcroft addressed the National Conference on Human Trafficking in Tampa, Florida. What follows are the Attorney General's prepared remarks. Please note, the Attorney General often deviates from prepared remarks.

I am honored to be here, and even more honored to have been preceded by the President of the United States. President Bush's presence today reminds us of the great gravity of the issues at stake in the struggle against human trafficking.

President Lincoln held firm in turbulent times to a vision of freedom for all, because he understood that the freedom that is endowed by our Creator, and which no man has a right to hinder or abuse, is the most transformative force in human history.

Like Lincoln, President Bush understands that among the foundations of our liberty are the dignity and worth of each and every individual. Like Lincoln, George W. Bush has confronted those who violate the dignity of individual human beings, even when such confrontation carries risks ... especially when it carries risks ... because to look the other way is to jeopardize the freedom of us all.

In the 19th Century, the threat to this vision of liberty was slavery. Today, we use a more lawyerly term, the euphemism, "human trafficking." But the term "human trafficking" does not capture the unique evil that is the making of our fellow man into a commodity. It does not describe adequately the experience of being treated like cattle to be bartered and bonded.

Modern day slavery is a better term for the girls as young as 7 years of age who are forced to perform repeated sex acts in brothels in Cambodia. Or for the women who, desiring a better life, leave their homelands only to be trapped in lives of misery and sexual abuse here in the United States.

As the President has made clear, two centuries after the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, the trade in human beings is a thriving industry worldwide.

And, sadly, it is happening here. The thousands of people trafficked here each year are forced to work in the sex trade, as agricultural laborers or in sweatshops. They are desperate for the necessities of life. Instead, they are scarred by exploitation rooted in greed.

This grotesque trade in human life is a global industry that provides hardened criminals an estimated \$8 billion to \$10 billion a year in profit.

These statistics are daunting. But our lives are not measured in statistics. Our national greatness is defined by the ideals that inspire us to endure and sacrifice. And behind each and every one of these statistics is a human face ... a woman being denied her humanity, and denied the opportunity to fulfill her potential, because she is denied her freedom. The President mentioned the Lee case, and there are others.

From August 2002 to March 2003, three brothers ... Juan Carlos Soto, Armando Soto, and Hector Soto ... and their henchmen smuggled groups of young women from Mexico into the United States. In the Edinburg, Texas area, they would house the women in mobile homes, then sell them into servitude. Sometimes, they kept the women for themselves.

For three months in 2003, Juan Carlos Soto held four women as his sex slaves. He raped the women repeatedly and forced them to work during the day, cooking and cleaning.

One day, February 7, 2003, Soto become enraged when two of the women tried to contact a neighbor for help. He ordered his men to transport the women to an irrigation ditch. There, he and his men raped and beat the two women to punish them. Soto then ordered his men to kill the women, but instead, his men let the women go.

Last January, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division prosecuted and convicted six defendants for their



Attorney General John Ashcroft addresses the National Conference on Human Trafficking in Tampa, Florida.

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brutal treatment of these women. They received sentences of up to 23 years in prison.

Cases such as this one shock our consciences, offend our values, and demand our compassionate, effective response. That is why from the very beginning of his Administration, President Bush has spoken forcefully and eloquently about the brutal crime of human trafficking. It is why one of my first acts as Attorney General was to make this assault on human dignity a top priority of the Justice Department.

On March 27, 2001, I announced a comprehensive anti-trafficking initiative focused on three key areas:

- Protecting the victims;
- Prosecuting the perpetrators; and
- Partnership-building that addresses, attacks and prevents human trafficking.

First, protecting victims. In enacting the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, Congress noted that its primary purposes included not only combating traffickers, but also protecting the victims.

One critical tool in reaching out to traumatized victims has been the use of T-visas. The T-visa helps trafficking victims who cooperate with law enforcement to investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible for their enslavement. It allows victims to remain in America for up to three years, after which they may seek permanent residency if they choose to do so. These visas also allow us to turn the exploitive tactics of traffickers against them.

T-visas are making an important difference one life at a time. Since I announced the implementation of T-visas, Department of Justice Civil Rights prosecutors have helped scores of victims remain in America.

These men, women and children have bravely stood and helped to achieve our second goal: bringing the perpetrators of human trafficking to justice. In the past three fiscal years, the Department of Justice has:

- Charged 110 traffickers. That is nearly a three-fold increase over the previous three fiscal years. Of these, 78 included sex-trafficking charge;
- In this fiscal year alone, we have charged an additional 43 traffickers;

- And as of July 2004, the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division had 168 open trafficking investigations, 98 of which were opened since the start of the fiscal year;
- Thus far, of the trafficking cases that have gone to trial, the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division has gained convictions or obtained guilty pleas from 107 defendants; and
- This number is significant. It represents a 100 percent conviction rate in our human trafficking prosecutions. 100 percent.

These prosecutions and convictions represent more than just the punishment of wrongdoers; they send a clear message that America will repel aggressively assaults on our core values of freedom and respect for human dignity.

We have had success in the past three years. But each of us understands that these efforts are only the beginning. That is why this conference is critical to forming the partnerships between local, state and federal law enforcement, prosecutors and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

This conference would not have been possible without the contributions of two men, Representatives Frank Wolf of Virginia and Chris Smith of New Jersey. Congressman Smith has been a forceful advocate for the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, and its reauthorization in 2003. And Congressman Wolf, through his steadfast support in the fight against human trafficking, was critical to designating Congressional funding specifically for this conference. I thank them for their efforts in the cause of justice.

The third and final focus to combat the evil of human trafficking is coordination and cooperation.

Our ability to investigate these heinous crimes, safeguard the victims, and prosecute the traffickers would not be possible were it not for the federal, state and local partnerships forged between law enforcement, prosecutors, and NGOs.

It is critical that we be able to work together to track down those who hide their barbaric businesses in the shadows, and to help their victims. No one knows a community better than the law enforcement and outreach organizations that are based there. Your efforts are critical to combating human trafficking. And I thank you for your efforts.

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To enhance the cooperation on every law enforcement level, it is important that across the nation human trafficking laws be comprehensive. During this conference, you will hear about a new, model state anti-trafficking law drafted by the Justice Department. Many states have laws that address various aspects of the crime of human trafficking. But comprehensive statutes are needed to deter and punish the wide range of tactics that traffickers use against their victims. This model legislation will achieve that goal.

Beyond bringing these criminals to justice, we must also address the needs of the victims through a coalition of conscience. The Bush Administration has provided more than \$35 million in funding to community-based service providers that aid trafficking victims. These groups are providing their clients with everything from the most basic necessities ... food, clothing and housing ... to education, job training and legal and immigration assistance.

These funds have helped us achieve much. But we will do more. I am pleased today to announce that the Department of Justice will make \$14 million available over three years for grants to law enforcement agencies and service providers. These grants will help to implement and to support task forces to identify, rescue and restore the victims of trafficking.

“But we will do more. I am pleased today to announce that the Department of Justice will make \$14 million available over three years for grants to law enforcement agencies and service providers.”

Let me tell you what can be achieved when we work together. In February 2002, Plainfield, New Jersey police raided a home where it was believed illegal aliens were engaged in prostitution. In that home, police discovered four terrified young girls from Mexico.

The girls, from extremely remote parts of Mexico, were between the ages of 14 to 16. They were lured to the United States by the promise of a better life. Instead, they were imprisoned by two women who guarded them constantly, abused them physically, and denied them the most basic necessities of daily life. In the two years of their captivity, the girls were never allowed to leave the house or to even speak. They suffered in silence as they were forced to have sex with 12 to 14 men a day.

Authorities in New Jersey sent the girls to one of the many organizations that provide services to victims of human trafficking. There, the girls received medical care, therapy, tutoring, and legal assistance.

All four girls were provided with T-visas and were involved actively in the Justice Department prosecution of their traffickers. Three of the girls even provided victim impact statements in the sentencing phase of the trial. With their help, the girls' two captors were each sentenced to more than 17 years in prison.

Today, two years later, so much has changed for these young women. One of the younger girls now resides happily in a foster home, another in a group home for independent living. They are doing well. Meanwhile, the two older girls were emancipated when they recently turned 18. They remain in America, working at full-time jobs and supporting themselves.

“As of July 2004, the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division had 168 open trafficking investigations.”

Two years ago, these girls were the faces of intolerable human suffering. Today, through the coordinated outreach of the justice community, and their personal courage, they are the faces of freedom.

We will ... we must ... continue to work together to protect the victims of trafficking and to bring to justice those who violate their human dignity. It falls to us ... all of us gathered here today ... to be the voices of these victims. We cannot ... we will not ... stand by as women and children are enslaved, and as the toll in suffering mounts.

In the 19th Century, our nation was torn apart by the issue of slavery, but President Lincoln saw the issue clearly: freedom was in the balance, not just for the slaves, but for all Americans.

"Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history," Lincoln wrote. "We ... will be remembered in spite of ourselves ... In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free ... honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve."

We, too, cannot escape history. At a time when our nation has once again been called to freedom's defense half way across the world, we cannot look past the threats to human dignity here at home. Two centuries after the end of the transatlantic slave trade, and more than a century after Lincoln's triumph, we are faced with a slave trade of the 21st Century.

Our duty is clear. The trade of human beings must not be allowed to thrive in our time. We must give freedom to the enslaved; assure freedom to the free; and know that our efforts are honorable in what they give, and what they preserve.

Thank you.

Assistant Attorney General Acosta Participates in “Ask the White House” Web Discussion on Trafficking

On July 16, 2004, Assistant Attorney General R. Alexander Acosta participated in “Ask the White House,” a daily web discussion hosted by the White House website – www.whitehouse.gov. The discussion was held in connection with the National Trafficking Conference. Below is a transcript of the discussion.

Alexander Acosta

Hello this is Alex Acosta I'm the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. It is my pleasure to be online with you today. We are talking about human trafficking today. In looking at the many questions which we've received so far, many of you are asking how big of a problem human trafficking is. The numbers are staggering. Here in the United States, according to recent estimates, between 14,500 and 17,500 individuals are trafficked in our nation. Globally between 600,000 and 800,000 men, women and children are trafficked against their will across international borders. The problem is substantial. The United Nations has estimated that after drugs and arms sales, human trafficking is the largest source of revenue for organized crime.

But I think we should understand that numbers alone don't capture the depth of seriousness and depth of evil that is human trafficking. Real life examples strike so much closer to the heart.

When I talk about human trafficking, I often use a photograph to make clear how evil human trafficking is. It is a photograph from one of our cases. I have the photograph in my office. The photograph shows a small room. Pretty much the size of a twin bed. It is separated from the rest of the house by a ragged blanket hung as a curtain. The victim in this case is a young girl of no more than 14 years of age. The girl was smuggled into this country by men who no doubt had promised her a better life. But instead these criminals stripped her of her freedom, of her dignity and her innocence.

They held her captive in this room and forced her to have sex with up to 30 men per day. And afterward, she was made to sleep in the very same bed. And that happened every night. 30 rapes per day, day after day after day.

“That is human trafficking. It is evil; it is hideous.”

Now this is a powerful image, but there's more. By the bed is a small night stand. On the nightstand there are two items. One is a teddy bear. This was the girl's only possession. She told us later that she kept

this teddy bear because it reminded her of her childhood. She was barely 14 years old but she recognized that her childhood had been lost already. The other item on that nightstand was a roll of paper towel.

That is human trafficking. It is evil; it is hideous. As the President said before the United Nations there is a special evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent and the most vulnerable. President Bush has reminded us that the victims of the sex trade see so little of life before they see the very worst of life. Even if they were just a handful of cases, it would be a serious problem. But when you think that there could be thousands of these cases taking place in America, you start to really understand the depth of this issue.

“Our goal is to rescue victims and help them restore their lives.”

Eli, from Fort Worth writes:

Hello. It is sad to me that this is an issue. What do you find in traffickers? are they just pathetic, soul-less monsters?

Alexander Acosta

In a word, yes. These are individuals who engage in modern day slavery. They prey on young, innocent, poor and the most vulnerable. They beat them, they rape them, they abuse them, sometimes they kill them and they do this for profit.

Karen, from Denver, Colorado writes:

How do you measure success?

Alexander Acosta

Initially Karen, success means rescuing victims. Our goal is to rescue victims and to help them restore their lives. And we have made the focus on victims a high priority. In fact, we use a victim-centered approach which puts the needs of the victim right up front.

When you find a victim, you make sure that our victim witness coordinator is in contact with the victim to make sure they get a medical screening, medical and dental services, they get emergency food and shelter. We work with them to provide them with their entitled continued presence and a law enforcement certification so they can apply for a t-visa so they can stay in the US.

We have helped hundreds of victims obtain that t-visa. And we have helped nearly 500 victims obtain continued presence. So as a result of our efforts, there are hundreds of women, girls and men from more than 34 countries who are here in the US safe and secure.

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But prosecutions are also important because we need to take these traffickers off the street and into jail. And over the last 3 1/2 years, DOJ has charged 150 individuals with trafficking. That is over triple the rate of charges over the prior 3 1/2 year period.

DOJ has thus far, convicted 107 individuals which as the Attorney General said earlier today is a 100 percent success rate. But I think we all recognize all this work in the field under the leadership of President Bush, we are asked to do much more.

150 charges is a good beginning. We know, and as President Bush has said, there are more traffickers out there and there is a special evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent.

We in the DOJ have to work with the local police to prosecute more cases and to rescue many, many more victims.

Vicente, from Coral Gables writes:

I read an article about you in the Miami Herald where you stated you know the power of fear. Do you find that people who are abducted are so afraid that most do not attempt to escape?

Alexander Acosta

The answer to your question, Vicente is absolutely. Many victims of trafficking are held not through physical force but through fear and coercion. And a critical component of federal law, the trafficking victims protection act, is that it is illegal to coerce an individual.

So we do not need to show actual force, we need to show coercion.

Earlier today, we heard the President talk about the different cases. In one case, a young girl was told if she ran away her family would be harmed. And so she was fearful. And that is why victims services is so important. That is why the t-visa is so important.

As we heard here at the conference earlier today, the Attorney General in March of 2001, put into effect regulations that allowed victims to apply for a t-visa which allows them to stay for three years and thereafter seek regular status.

As President Bush has emphasized again and again, it is so important to make victims feel secure. We should recognize that victims of human trafficking often don't speak the language. They are far from their country. Victims are far from their family. They have no local contacts or friends.

They are here without documentation. Victims are not going to call us because they are fearful.

That is why President Bush has made clear that we must be proactive in seeking out the victims ourselves as well as the criminal enterprises that victimized them.

James, from Richmond writes:

How do you get grassroots support? How can you get ordinary people to help in this effort?

We have support groups for everything else. But it doesn't seem like there is a unified, volunteer effort which could help you.

Alexander Acosta James,

This is exactly why we are here. Because we do have grass roots support. We do have a network of service providers, community-based service providers and faith-based service providers that help victims and receive money from the federal government to engage in this type of work.

President Bush wants to make clear this administration's commitment to supporting these groups but in unifying these groups with local law enforcement and combined task forces which move these prosecutions and prevention and protection efforts to the next level.

We need to make the public aware of the need to find these cases and to make community and faith based providers aware of this issue so that we do have grass roots recognition of the problem.

In the past, we established task forces in Tampa, Phoenix, Philadelphia and Atlanta and most recently in Northern Virginia along with the Department of Health and Human Services. These task forces are important because they work at the grass roots level to bring local law enforcement, service providers, DOJ and HHS together to create local network to focus on this issue.



Assistant Attorney General R. Alexander Acosta addresses the National Conference on Human Trafficking in Tampa, Florida.

“Ask the White House” Web Discussion on Trafficking, continued from Page 10

Today we announced that we want to form at least a dozen additional task forces in the next several weeks around the nation to further unify grass roots support.

Ed, from San Antonio writes:

What happens to the victims of human trafficking if they are rescued? Are they deported?

Alexander Acosta

The answer is no, no, no and no. Victims are not deported, we need to make that clear.

An earlier question asked "are victims fearful"? One of the reasons they are fearful is that they fear deportation.

I want to be absolutely clear, victims are not deported. In fact, under the law victims have the right to stay in the U.S. And there are two ways they can do this.

“We need to make the public aware of the need to find these cases and to make community and faith based providers aware of this issue so that we do have grass roots recognition of the problem.”

First they can receive continued presence. It is a term we use that allows victims to stay in the US pending an outcome of a trial.

The second method is called a t-visa, which allows them to stay in our country for up to three years and to thereafter apply for legal permanent status.

We have given t-visas and continued presence to I believe 584 victims. It is our policy that each and every individual who is a victim is entitled to continued presence or a t-visa receives our support in their application.

And in fact, if ever a prosecutor believes that a victim should not receive continued presence or a t-visa, they do not have that authority to make that decision on their own. They need to ask permission from myself or my deputy before they can make a decision not to grant certification for continued presence or a t-visa.

So I want to be clear again that victims are not deported. They are rescued and they stay in the US. And once here they have the right to be treated as if they were a refugee. They have a right to medical services, dental services and emergency food and shelter. And then they are put in touch with a service provider, NGO's, which are organizations which are funded by DOJ and HHS and then begin restoring the individual's life.

Ann, from Aurora writes:

Mr. Acosta, So what is new about today? Why the focus on this issue now?

Alexander Acosta

Ann,

The focus on the issue is not just this week. Under the leadership of President Bush, we have been working on this issue since the very beginning of 2001.

Attorney General on March 27, 2001 announced increased resources to combat human trafficking. He announced a hotline to address issues regarding human trafficking.

Let me add that we now have a national hotline in place for individuals to call if they believe that human trafficking is happening in their neighborhoods.

That number is: 1-888-428-7581

We have had a hotline in place since 2001 and we have been focusing resources on this issue.

In fact, for the past 3 1/2 years we have tripled the number of prosecutions to 150. And we have drastically increased the number of victims rescues. I believe it is 584 victims rescued.

It is something we have been working on a long time. It is a high priority.

I will state this however. We have learned that it is important to periodically focus substantial attention on this issue in order to make sure that Americans and community groups know and understand that this takes place in their neighborhood.

By President Bush coming here today, he has reminded Americans the importance of looking beneath the surface, to realize what they see in like in instances of domestic abuse might be in fact be human trafficking.

So we are very grateful for the leadership he has shown on this issue.

Jennifer, from Westport writes:

There was a big article in the New York Times about a month or so ago about human traffickers. How do you take the profit out of it?

“Under the leadership of President Bush, we have been working on this issue since the very beginning of 2001.”

Alexander Acosta

The answer to your question Jennifer is through prosecutions.

You take the profit out of trafficking the same way you take the profit out of any other crime -- by shutting down the criminal enterprise that victimizes these women, these girls, these individuals.

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You take the profit out of it by making clear to traffickers that if they indulge in these criminal acts that they will pay for it.

You take the profit out of it by making clear that we will use every legal means necessary to interdict, investigate, prosecute and punish these individuals.

The more we prosecute, the harder it is for them to engage in these criminal enterprises and less profitable it will be.

The NY Times article also brought out an important point, it pointed out that trafficking was happening in people's backyards like Plainfield, New Jersey where folks might not have suspected that in an average looking house on a small street, trafficking was taking place.

And a critical way to taking profit out of trafficking is public awareness. By having folks understand that this is taking place in their neighborhoods and when they see something that may be trafficking, calling our hotline and reporting it.

But the best way to remove the profit out of it is by reducing the demand. Of course, profit is a function of supply

and demand and we need to work, and this is a point that President Bush made very, very clear today, we need to reduce the demand -- we need to in fact eliminate that demand.

Alexander Acosta

I thank everyone for the questions. I am pleased that folks are showing interest in the issue. As I mentioned going forward, the administration intends to roll out task forces in several cities to build on the energy developed in this conference. To build on the energy and the inspiration that the participants here drew from the President's remarks. In the next few weeks, you'll be seeing in your communities US Attorneys, federal law enforcement focusing on this issue along with local police and local community groups.

“You take the profit out of trafficking the same way you take the profit out of any other crime -- by shutting down the criminal enterprise that victimizes these women, these girls, these individuals.”

I hope that everyone online maintains their interest in this issue and helps to increase public awareness. I was pleased at all the questions that were sent and I really look forward to participating in "Ask the White House" again sometime soon.



CASE UPDATES

United States v. Curtis (D.C.)

On July 2, a federal court convicted Carlos Curtis on charges that included the sex trafficking of children and possession of child pornography. In November 2002, the defendant transported a 12-year-old juvenile from New York to Washington, D.C., for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation.

United States v. Kang (E.D.N.Y.)

On February 2, a New York couple and a Department of Homeland Security agent were charged for their roles in a Brooklyn trafficking scheme. The couple, who are Korean immigrants, allegedly lured Korean women to New York City with promises of good jobs as hostesses in the their nightclub. Instead, they allegedly sub-

jected their victims to rapes and physical abuse, held them for repayment of a \$10,000 debt, and attempted to force them to perform commercial sex acts. The Department of Homeland Security agent allegedly attempted to force one of the victims to get on a flight to South Korea to keep her from testifying against the couple.

On July 1, an additional defendant, also a Korean immigrant, was indicted for conspiracy to obstruct justice and obstruction of justice for attempting to conceal business records and other documents from the bar run by the couple.

United States v. Valle-Maldonado (C.D. Cal.)

On July 1, additional defendants in the Valle-Maldonado case pleaded guilty for their roles in a sex trafficking conspiracy.

Jenny Valle-Maldonado and Javier Sandoval-Garcia pleaded guilty to smuggling several adult women and minor girls into the United States from Mexico for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation in Los Angeles area massage parlors.

Valle Maldonado is scheduled for sentencing on October 4, and Sandoval-Garcia will be sentenced on September 27.

Co-defendant Juan Gergorio Martinez-Vasquez was convicted at trial on June 16. He is scheduled for sentencing on August 16. Another co-defendant, Jose Velasquez-Garcia pleaded guilty on June 9 and will be sentenced on September 13.