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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE ANNOUNCES HUMAN TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND GRANTS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT TO FIGHT HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND ASSIST VICTIMS

Washington, D.C., Awarded \$450,000 Grant

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Assistant Attorney General R. Alexander Acosta of the Civil Rights Division, Assistant Attorney General Christopher A. Wray of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Kenneth L. Wainstein of the District of Columbia announced today that the Department of Justice is awarding more than \$7.6 million in grants—of which \$450,000 will go to the District of Columbia—to enable state and local law enforcement to fight human trafficking by creating task forces to aid in the identification and rescue of human trafficking victims.

In the District of Columbia, Michael A. Mason, Assistant Director of the FBI's Washington Field Office, and Metropolitan Police Department Chief Charles Ramsey joined the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Criminal Division and the Civil Rights Division in announcing the establishment of a task force that will join with a variety of non-governmental organizations and service providers to combat the growing problem of human trafficking within Washington, D.C. The law enforcement component of the Task Force will build upon the Metropolitan Police Department's long-standing efforts to eliminate prostitution in the District of Columbia through its highly-experienced Prostitution Unit. Along with dedicated resources from the FBI, MPD officers and FBI agents will follow the tried and true method of identifying and apprehending the prostitutes on the streets and then working "up the chain" to make cases against the traffickers themselves. The District joined 16 other U.S. Attorney's Offices across the country that have created task forces to attack human trafficking in every form.

The Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) provided and will administer the awards under a new grant program that enables states and local law enforcement to work with victim and social services organizations and federal agencies to identify human trafficking victims and bring perpetrators to justice. Grant awards will not exceed \$450,000 and will supplement existing efforts within the communities, such as those of the victims of trafficking services and refugee resettlement agencies.

The D.C. Task Force on Trafficking in Persons, part of a broader push by the Department of Justice and other federal agencies, concentrates the resources of the Criminal and Civil Rights Divisions of the Department of Justice, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, the FBI and the Metropolitan Police Department on the problem of human trafficking in the District of Columbia. The Task Force will work closely with community organizations and support groups committed to helping the victims of this crime. The Task Force effort is in conjunction with Operation Innocence Lost, a program sponsored by the FBI Crimes Against Children Division, the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) of the Criminal Division and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Innocence Lost,

announced in early 2003, is a nationwide initiative to focus on child victims of interstate sex trafficking in the United States.

“Local law enforcement and community-based organizations, particularly faith-based groups, are best situated to identify trafficking victims in their communities during the course of their field operations and delivery of social services,” said Assistant Attorney General Acosta. “Increasing the capacity of local law enforcement to work jointly with community-based social service providers and federal law enforcement is essential to combating such human degradation.”

“The trafficking of children for the purpose of sexual exploitation is a particularly heinous offense,” said Assistant Attorney General Wray. “Our prosecutors will join forces with the U.S. Attorney’s Office to remove the scourge of child sexual exploitation in the District of Columbia and elsewhere.”

U.S. Attorney Wainstein said, “Human trafficking victimizes society’s most vulnerable individuals—frightened runaways and illegal immigrants who become trapped in a cycle of violence, prostitution and forced labor. In the District of Columbia, it also supports a prostitution and sex trade that undermines the quality of life in many of our neighborhoods. The Task Force announced today will assemble our collective resources in an effort to eliminate human trafficking from the District of Columbia. With this new partnership and with the generous support of the Department of Justice, we will be able to treat the human trafficker with a firm hand while we reach out to his victim with a helping hand.”

Human trafficking is a brutal crime. Some victims are forced, defrauded or coerced into prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation. Others are compelled to work in sweat shops, in agricultural fields or as domestic servants. Each year, an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 men, women and children are trafficked against their will across international borders. Of those, 14,500 to 17,500 are trafficked into the United States.

President Bush, in a September 23, 2003, address to the United Nations, noted: “There’s a special evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent and vulnerable. The victims of sex trade see little of life before they see the very worst of life—an underground of brutality and lonely fear. Those who create these victims and profit from their suffering must be severely punished. Those who patronize this industry debase themselves and deepen the misery of others. And governments that tolerate this trade are tolerating a form of slavery.”

President Bush signed the “Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003,” which amended and reauthorized the “Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000” (TVPA). TVPA seeks to combat human trafficking by punishing traffickers, protecting victims and mobilizing U.S. government agencies to wage a global anti-trafficking campaign. TVPA, as amended, contains significant mandates for the U.S. Departments of State, Justice, Labor,

Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Recent prosecutions illustrate the tragic nature of human trafficking. In a case prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia and CEOS, Carlos J. Curtis of Brooklyn, New York was found guilty on July 2, 2004, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia of five counts, including the first prosecution in D.C. of sex trafficking of children under 18 U.S.C. Section 1591, which was enacted a part of the TVPA. Curtis and an accomplice enticed a 12-year-old runaway child to become a prostitute by offering her food, clothing and shelter. Curtis and his accomplices transported the child, along with a 17-year-old runaway from Maryland, to the District of Columbia, where they sold the children for sex. In a separate prosecution, also in the District of Columbia, two defendants, Gary "Sweat" Gates and Tamisha Heyward, also known as Quilena Taylor, were convicted of, among other things, running an illegal sex trafficking operation which involved the prostitution of more than 30 women—including girls as young as 14—and publicizing its services through a website called "redlightspecialinc.com."

In mid-July 2004, the Department of Justice hosted the first-ever national training conference to combat human trafficking within the United States and to rescue its victims. President Bush and Attorney General John Ashcroft spoke at the conference in Tampa, Florida, which included an announcement of grant awards to nine organizations that provide shelter for victims of trafficking. The conference brought together over 500 attendees, comprising hundreds of state and local law enforcement officers, victim service providers, and prosecutors from cities with a known concentration of trafficking victims. Over the course of three days, participants attended workshops and plenary sessions on topics such as trafficking prevention, interdiction and rescue and investigation and prosecution. Today's announcement builds on this effort by providing funds for law enforcement to work closely with human trafficking victim organizations in a two-pronged approach to assist victims and punish perpetrators.

The latest U.S. government interagency report on human trafficking, *Assessment of U.S. Government Activities to Combat Trafficking in Persons*, can be found at www.usdoj.gov/trafficking. A full list of the recipients of the Law Enforcement and Service Provider Multidisciplinary Anti-Trafficking Task Force Awards is attached.

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