



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM, HOMELAND
SECURITY, AND INVESTIGATIONS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

AT A HEARING ENTITLED

**“INNOCENCE FOR SALE: DOMESTIC MINOR SEX
TRAFFICKING”**

**PRESENTED
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Homeland Security, and Investigations
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Good morning Chairman Sensenbrenner, Ranking Member Scott, Vice Chairman Gohmert, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. I am pleased to be here with you today to discuss the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) efforts to combat child sex trafficking.

It's nearly unthinkable, but every year thousands of children become victims of crime—whether it's through kidnappings, violent attacks, sexual abuse, or online predators.

While victims come from all socioeconomic backgrounds, they are often targeted because of individual vulnerabilities. Many have already experienced abusive or troubled families, have disabilities, come from families with very limited resources, have run away, are involved in the juvenile justice, dependency or foster care systems, or are estranged from protective networks because of their LGBT identity. In the hands of their abusers, these individuals will be subjected to numerous sexual assaults and continued abuse, including sex trafficking.

Over the last several years, the FBI, state and local law enforcement, and the public have developed a deeper understanding of the ways in which children are being victimized. More incidents of child exploitation involving a connection to online activity are being identified for investigation than ever before. Between fiscal years 1996 and 2007, the number of cases opened throughout the FBI dramatically increased from just over 100 to more than 2,000. From 2007 to the present, the numbers have steadily continued to rise. In December 2013, the FBI had over 7,000 pending investigations involving child exploitation, including sex trafficking of minors and child pornography.

To combat this threat, the FBI utilizes an intelligence-based threat driven approach and the expertise of those in its Violent Crimes Against Children (VCAC) program. The mission of the VCAC is to provide a rapid, proactive, and comprehensive response to counter all threats of abuse and exploitation of children when those crimes fall under the jurisdiction and authority of the FBI; to identify and rescue child victims; to reduce the vulnerability of children to in-person and online sexual exploitation and abuse; and to strengthen the capabilities of the FBI and federal, state, local, tribal, and international law enforcement partners through training, intelligence sharing, technical support, and investigative assistance.

Our strategy involves using multi-disciplinary and multi-agency teams to investigate and prosecute crimes that cross, geographical, and jurisdictional boundaries; promoting and

enhancing interagency sharing of intelligence, specialized skills, and services; and widely offering our victim/witness services. All for the express purpose of protecting our nation's greatest asset—our children.

Historical Overview of the FBI's Response to Child Sexual Exploitation

While investigating the disappearance of a juvenile in May 1993, FBI special agents from the Baltimore Field Office and detectives from the Prince George's County (Maryland) Police Department identified two suspects who had sexually exploited numerous juveniles over a 25-year period. An investigation into these activities revealed that adults were routinely using computers to transmit sexually explicit images of minors and, in some instances, to lure minors into engaging in illicit sexual activity. Further investigation and discussions with experts, both within the FBI and in the private sector, revealed that the use of computer telecommunications was rapidly becoming one of the most prevalent techniques by which some sex offenders shared pornographic images of minors and identified and recruited children into sexual relationships. In 1995, based on information developed during this investigation, the Innocent Images National Initiative—initially part of our Cyber Division—was created to address this type of criminal activity conducted by users of commercial and private online services and the Internet.

In 2000, the Crimes Against Children program was formed by our Violent Crimes Section—part of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division. It was under this umbrella that programs such as the Innocence Lost National Initiative and Child Abduction Rapid Deployment Teams were implemented to provide additional resources and response tools to combat the ever-present problems of child sex trafficking, child abduction, and child sex tourism.

In October 2012, the Crimes Against Children program and the Innocent Images National Initiative merged to form the Violent Crimes Against Children program in the Criminal Investigative Division. The program continues the efforts of both former iterations, providing centralized coordination and analysis of case information that is national and international in scope, requiring close cooperation not only among FBI field offices and legal attachés but also with state, local, tribal, and foreign governments.

In many instances, successful sex trafficking investigations are the result of FBI's federal, state, and local task force partners using traditional techniques on the street. In other cases, we have agents and officers actively working online undercover, examining and utilizing websites where pimps are advertising child victims. We also receive and investigate tips from the public, as well as from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) and the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, a Department of Health and Human Services hotline, administered under grant by the Polaris Project.

In addition to its state and local partnerships, the FBI also coordinates the Violent Crimes Against Children International Task Force—a select cadre of international law

enforcement experts working together to formulate and deliver a dynamic global response to crimes against children through the establishment and development of strategic partnerships, the vigorous engagement of relevant law enforcement, and the extensive use of liaison, operational support, and coordination to facilitate multi-lateral cooperation.

Innocence Lost National Initiative

This year marks the 11th anniversary of the FBI's most prominent initiative to combat the problem of sex trafficking of children within the United States. In June of 2003, the FBI and the Department's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) joined NCMEC to launch the Innocence Lost National Initiative (ILNI). While it is difficult to imagine, we have seen children as young as 11 years-old targeted for sex trafficking in the United States. Once under the control of a pimp, escape is often difficult because the captor often tightly controls access to money or responds to attempted escapes with brutal violence.

Through ILNI, the FBI and its partners execute Operation Cross Country—a nationwide enforcement action focusing on victims of child sex trafficking. Our most recent operation in July 2013—our seventh and largest such operation—concluded with the recovery of 106 commercially sexually exploited children and the arrests of 151 pimps and other individuals.

This most recent operation took place in 76 cities and was carried out by the FBI in partnership with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies and NCMEC. Over 1,300 law enforcement officers across the country have been trained, in preparation for these operations, through the Protecting Victims of Child Prostitution Course, in partnership with NCMEC.

Task force operations can begin as local actions, targeting such places as truck stops, casinos, street “tracks,” hotels, and Internet websites, based on intelligence gathered by officers working in their respective jurisdictions.

By utilizing information obtained through these operations and by building a strong rapport with victims, the FBI often uncovers organized efforts to prostitute women and children across many states. These investigations can lead to local, state, or federal charges. To date, our investigations have led to the conviction of more than 1,400 pimps, madams, and their associates who commercially exploit children through prostitution. These convictions have resulted in lengthy sentences, including multiple life sentences and the seizure of real property, vehicles, and monetary assets.

The FBI has developed special teams and protocols for prevention and enforcement actions surrounding large-scale sporting events and other events of national interest. Large-scale events also present significant opportunities for those who would exploit our children. It is important to note, this is not a problem associated with an individual event. Trafficking criminal enterprises travel across states to go to these events and the FBI and its partners are there, prepared to rescue our children and bring their traffickers to justice.

In our most successful special event coordination, sixteen girls were rescued at the 2014 Super Bowl in an FBI-led operation targeting commercial child sex trafficking; 48 suspected pimps and their associates were arrested.

It is important to note that the Bureau does more than investigate those who exploit victims of trafficking. The FBI's Office for Victim Assistance, victim specialists from the U.S. Attorneys' Offices, and other non-governmental victim assistance service providers are involved in all stages of the coordination and execution of these events in an effort to address the many challenges facing each victim.

Often with histories of poverty, homelessness, and exposure to violence and abuse, victims may have difficulties reaching out for help or determining who they can trust. Juveniles who get caught up in sex trafficking face myriad obstacles and enormous needs—including very basic needs such as safe housing, subsistence, and schooling—if they are able to leave that life. In addition, they may need substance abuse treatment, medical treatment, and mental health services. Many face impediments to reuniting with their family of origin, so they may need help to prepare for independent living. Our victim services teams advise them of their rights and ensure they get the help they need to address their short-term and long-term needs—such as legal and repatriation services, immigration relief, housing, employment, education, job training, and child care. Nearly 400 victims have been provided services as a result of Operation Cross Country to date.

Child Sex Tourism Initiative

Since 2008, the FBI's Child Sex Tourism Initiative has employed proactive strategies to identify U.S. citizens who travel overseas to engage in commercial and non-commercial sexual conduct with children. These strategies also include a multi-disciplinary approach through partnerships with foreign law enforcement and non-governmental organizations to provide child victims with available support services. In 2013, these efforts continued with successful prosecutions for illegal activities occurring in various locations throughout the world.

For example, on December 4, 2013, John Ott was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison, followed by lifetime supervised release, for engaging in sexual conduct with a child. Between 2004 and 2005, Ott traveled to Kenya and began working as a medical doctor at a non-governmental organization. During this period, Ott was suspected of sexually abusing boys who were approximately 11 to 13 years of age and provided them with money and other goods. Upon returning to the U.S. in 2009, Ott joined an organization located in New Mexico which provided an opportunity for him to travel to South America. In July 2011, Ott returned to Kenya where he began working as a medical doctor at a local hospital. On December 10, 2012, Ott was arrested in Tanzania and subsequently charged in the United States. To date, approximately 29 child victims have been identified as being sexually abused by Ott.

Public Outreach

The FBI-SOS program is a nationwide initiative designed to educate children about the dangers they face on the Internet and to help prevent crimes against children. It promotes cyber citizenship among students by engaging them in a fun, age-appropriate, competitive online program where they learn how to safely and responsibly use the Internet. The program emphasizes the importance of cyber safety topics such as password security, smart surfing habits, and the safeguarding of personal information.

Since 2007, the FBI and Clear Channel have worked together to form a partnership that would take advantage of the new digital outdoor networks ability to react to local conditions quickly and inform the public of important community information. The FBI has already apprehended dozens of criminals as a direct result of these digital out-of-home “Wanted” messages in the past four years. With instantaneous alerts, digital billboards are one of the most effective means for public service communications and in providing emergency messaging of many types.

Conclusion

The FBI employs a multi-faceted approach to combat the complex problem of child sex trafficking. As a result, our efforts span from investigation to prosecution, and are supplemented by an array of investigative, training, outreach, and victim services carried out by a wide range of components. Simply put, we are proud of the work we do in this area, and look forward to continuing to have a leading role in the government-wide fight against child sex trafficking.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am now happy to answer any questions you may have.