

Teen Prostitutes Rescued

The FBI announced today that, along with local and state law enforcement, they've recovered nearly 50 children who were being prostituted domestically.

✖ **Feb. 23, 2009** – In a three-day sting operation involving 29 cities and all levels of law enforcement, the FBI reported today the recovery of 48 children nationwide who were trapped in the sex trade, some as young as 13.

“We continue to pursue those who exploit our nation’s children,” said FBI Director Robert S. Mueller, III. “We may not be able to return their innocence but we can remove them from this cycle of abuse and violence.”

Nearly 600 people were arrested on state and federal charges for the domestic trafficking of children for prostitution and solicitation during Operation Cross Country, an action of the Innocence Lost National Initiative, which the FBI’s Criminal Investigative Division formed in 2003 in partnership with the Child Exploitation-Obscenity Section of the Justice Department and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

Task forces affiliated with the program have reportedly recovered 670 children to date and have helped secure convictions and lengthy sentences for criminals.

Lois Lee, founder of the **child-rescue group Children of the Night**, said Monday she believes local law enforcement deserve most of the credit. She also said the FBI should be accountable for where they place the recovered children.

“Those of us in the field know that many of these children are placed in detention on ‘material witness holds’ until they testify against the pimp,” Lee said. “Then [they’re] released to the social service systems or families that failed them in

the first place.”

An FBI official said young victims forced into prostitution are usually abandoned children. “Unfortunately, the vast majority of these kids are what they term ‘throwaway kids,’ with no family support, no friends,” FBI Deputy Assistant Director Daniel Roberts told the Associated Press. “They’re kids that nobody wants, they’re loners. Many are runaways.”

Lee, who began rescuing children in the 1980s, said pimps often move from city to city looking for children who look to be alone, alienated.

“Children are recruited by pimps in arcades, malls, entertainment centers, at tourist attractions and concerts,” she said. “The pimp seduces a new recruit with the lure of wealth and the luxury of designer clothes, fancy cars, and exclusive nightclubs.”

Regrettably, thousands of children are victimized in the U.S. every year, she said. “Child prostitution is an immense and devastating problem that nobody wants to recognize, nobody wants to talk about, and everyone wants to cover up. Child prostitutes are not only abandoned by their parents, but by the social services system as well.”