

FBI Rescues 79 Kids in Sex Trafficking Sting

Led by the FBI, a nationwide law enforcement sting has ended with the arrest of scores of sex traffickers. A three-day law enforcement action known as **Operation Cross Country** saw 79 children rescued and 104 pimps arrested on a variety of prostitution-related charges.

“Child prostitution remains a major threat to children across America,” said Kevin L. Perkins, acting executive assistant director of the FBI’s Criminal, Cyber, Response, and Services Branch. “It is a violent and deplorable crime, and we are working with our partners to disrupt and put behind bars individuals and members of criminal enterprises who would sexually exploit children.”

Operation Cross Country is part of the Innocence Lost National Initiative that was created in 2003 by the FBI’s Criminal Investigative Division, in partnership with the Department of Justice and National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), to address the growing problem of domestic **child sex trafficking** in the United States.

“Once again, thanks to decade-long FBI leadership, it is clear that child prostitution and sex trafficking do not just occur somewhere else on the other side of the world,” said Ernie Allen, president of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. “These insidious crimes are occurring in American cities and the victims are American kids.”

To date, the 47 Innocence Lost Task Forces and Working Groups have recovered more than 2,200 children from the streets. The investigations and subsequent 1,017 convictions have resulted in lengthy sentences, including eight life terms and the seizure of more than \$3.1 million in assets.

Task force operations usually begin as local enforcement actions targeting such places as truck stops, casinos, street "tracks," and the Internet, based on intelligence gathered by officers working in their respective jurisdictions.

Initial arrests are often violations of local and state laws relating to prostitution or solicitation. Information gleaned from those arrested often uncovers organized efforts to prostitute women and children across many states.

FBI agents further develop this information in partnership with U.S. Attorney's Offices and the U.S. Department of Justice's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section and file federal charges where appropriate.

The Innocence Lost National Initiative brings state and federal law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and social service providers from across the country to NCMEC, where the groups train together. In addition, the Department of Justice has reinforced the training by assigning prosecutors to help bring cases in those cities where child prostitution occurs.