



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
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Child and Family Maltreatment  
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Thank you very much. I'm honored to join you this morning. I'm sure there are a few people in the audience this morning who may be wondering why someone from the Department of Homeland Security is speaking at this conference. The answer can be found by looking at how the agency I lead, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, was formed – and what authorities and expertise were combined within it -- when the Department of Homeland Security was created in early 2003.

ICE is the largest investigative agency in the Department of Homeland Security, and we are charged --as the name says-- with enforcing the nation's immigration and customs laws. ICE has a broad portfolio of law enforcement responsibilities – one of the largest and most diverse in the federal government.

We are responsible for immigration enforcement, money laundering investigations, enforcement of trade laws, and a number of other authorities. In each of these areas, we're bringing innovative new law enforcement tools to bear in the fight against criminal

activity. That includes the cause that brings us together today – the need to protect children from the threat of exploitation, in all its forms.

So what I am here to talk to you about today is a new initiative ICE launched that has helped us take an even more aggressive stance against those who exploit children—both here in the United States and abroad.

In the summer of 2003, ICE launched “Operation Predator,” a law enforcement initiative to target child sex predators. This is essentially an umbrella program that focuses our efforts to protect children. What are the powers we have at ICE to do this?

We have human trafficking authorities that enable us to go after organized criminal enterprises that bring children into this country to exploit them. We enforce child pornography laws, specifically those aimed at shutting down the exchange of child pornography over the Internet. And we have civil immigration authorities, the power to detain and deport aliens who have been convicted of crimes against children in the United States.

Finally, we are the lead agency in enforcing the new Protect Act that makes it a crime for someone to travel from this country overseas to engage in sex with children.

Coordinating and prioritizing these efforts to protect children has yielded incredible results: Since its launch just 18 months ago, “Operation Predator” has resulted in the

arrest, detention or deportation of more than 4,800 child sex predators – 1,200 here in California alone, the highest single state total. These include both producers and consumers of child pornography; registered sex offenders who have been deported; child sex tourists; and human traffickers who trade in children.

I would like to briefly look at our efforts in each of these areas of law enforcement.

When we look at child exploitation we must address the global rise of human trafficking—both within countries and across national borders. Here in San Diego, close to the border with Mexico, it is common for ICE agents to investigate and arrest human traffickers.

We are talking about organized groups that traffic victims into the United States against their will or with false promises. In its most severe forms, human trafficking amounts to nothing less than modern-day slavery. Human trafficking is big business -- generating untold profit for the criminal networks that provide the service and maintain the infrastructure to move people across borders.

Investigators at ICE have witnessed the evils of this criminal practice. Cramped shipping containers, poorly ventilated boxcars, stifling truck trailers, crammed with dozens of people seeking a passage to freedom, independence, and opportunity. All too often, it is a journey that leads the innocent victims into a nightmare of forced labor in sweatshops, or into sexual servitude in a brothel, or, in the most extreme cases, to their deaths.

And it's not only adults who are victimized by these criminal networks. Children, as well, are caught up in the web of human trafficking, where they are sold on the market as

laborers or prostitutes. For these children, there is no escape from this deadly form of exploitation.

ICE has made human trafficking one of our top priorities, in order to combat the criminal networks that force women and children – and the victims are overwhelmingly women and children – into these forms of servitude. We successfully dismantled one organization that was trafficking young Mexican girls to Newark, New Jersey, luring them in with promises of a better life in this country.

When they got here, they were forced into prostitution. Working with Mexican officials, we arrested traffickers in the U.S. and Mexico, put the ring out of business, rescued the women who were being abused, provided victim witness services, and obtained the cooperation we needed to bring criminal prosecutions.

The Newark case illustrates how ICE is also developing ways to work more closely with victim-witnesses. Effective witness testimony can be a critical step in the investigative process. That often helps us to identify the perpetrators in child exploitation cases and gives us greater insight into how they operate.

ICE has taken a leading role in combating child sex tourism. These are cases where rather than preying on children trafficked here, the predator travels from the United States to other countries to abuse children. In today's world, it's easier than ever before for sexual predators to travel abroad to commit their crimes. These predators believe they

can travel to other countries – to Cambodia, to the Philippines, to Central America – to exploit children and then return home to their regular lives.

We are changing that perception. We want these criminals to know that they will be arrested, and they will be punished here in the United States – where our penalties for child sex tourism are among the toughest in the world. ICE has made arrests of predators as they are about to leave the country; in Cambodia and elsewhere overseas; as they return to the U.S.; and even as they sit at home after completing one of their predatory trips abroad, believing that they have escaped justice.

We are able to do this because the PROTECT Act, which President Bush signed into law in 2003, strengthens the hand of U.S. law enforcement to arrest and prosecute American citizens who exploit children overseas. And the PROTECT Act boosts penalties for child sex tourism as a further deterrent – those convicted face up to 30 years in jail. ICE has brought the first 11 cases under this new statute.

One of our cases originated in California. In October 2003, ICE agents in Los Angeles arrested John Seljan as he prepared to board an international flight bound for the Philippines. In his luggage, the arresting officers discovered a large cache of pornographic materials and sex aids, along with over 100 pounds of chocolate and candy.

Our investigation revealed that Seljan possessed hundreds of photographs of himself in sexually explicit poses, and that he had written a series of letters to 9 to 12 year old Filipino girls in which he had sent them cash and promised to teach them about sex.

Seljan attempted to argue that his activities were legal in the Philippines; he lost that argument. In November, a judge found him guilty on several charges related to the exploitation of children. Today John Seljan is awaiting sentencing, facing a maximum sentence of 270 years in prison.

It's a disturbing case, made all the more startling by the fact that Seljan is an 86-year-old grandfather. It serves to remind us that there is no "typical" sexual predator. It is disturbing, too, in the expression of what predators view as acceptable conduct overseas.

We are working to change that perception as well. The Department of Homeland Security entered into a working agreement with the U.S. State Department and World Vision, a non-profit global relief and development organization, to target U.S. citizens who engage in child sex tourism.

A key component of this effort is an extensive advertising campaign in destination countries for child sex tourists, to warn them of the penalties they will face for their crimes. This is a promising approach, and it's an excellent illustration of how law enforcement and public and private groups can work together to combat the evils of child sex exploitation and trafficking.

Children are trafficked into the United States. Americans go abroad to engage in sex with children. Other predators take advantage of the Internet to trade in images of children being abused in what they perceive to be the safety and anonymity of cyberspace. But while the Internet provides the avenue for this horrific crime, it also provides law enforcement with the way to identify these predators.

In one of our most successful child pornography cases we did just that. ICE launched an investigation into Regpay, a firm based in Belarus that provided billing services for child pornography websites. You see, the weakness in this process of selling images over the Internet is that the predator has to pay for it, and so the predator leaves a trail for investigators to follow.

Our agents used the billing records, the credit card transactions, to identify consumers of child pornography. The list was truly overwhelming. Thousands upon thousands of credit card transactions were identified -- more than 20,000 in the United States alone. Hundreds of leads were sent out to our ICE offices, from this one case.

The numbers were so potentially overwhelming that we had to prioritize those cases: going after people in positions of trust first. We arrested pediatricians, camp counselors, school bus drivers, law enforcement officers, and teachers. This is stark, incontrovertible proof that, once again, there is no typical child sex predator.

It is a worldwide problem. In Regpay, we have sent hundreds of leads to our foreign law enforcement counterparts. Australia has been particularly successful in following up on those leads.

ICE has also been working with Interpol to issue “Green Notice” alerts to share information on child sex offenders who have been deported from the United States. This is a way for us to put out an international warning and alert law enforcement authorities around the world to be aware of these individuals, to be alert that these individuals have a history of exploiting children. Again, that’s a positive step and it shows real progress in our global partnership.

My hope is that we can build on these steps, to share information about known predators around the world and to ensure that they are not in a position to commit their crimes against children again.

Right now, nowhere is that need for a global approach to combating child sex predators more painfully illustrated than in Southeast Asia, in areas devastated by the tsunami that struck one month ago. The stories of the humanitarian disaster are, by now, sadly familiar to us all – lives lost; homes and livelihoods washed away; the threats of hunger and disease looming still.



We should add to this litany the threat of child exploitation and child trafficking -- on the part of those criminal elements and predators who might seek opportunity in the disruption and disorder that have followed in the wake of the tragedy.

We know that, for many governments in countries affected by the disaster, this is a matter of serious and urgent concern. The government of Indonesia, for example, moved swiftly to tighten the rules governing international adoptions, in order to make it more difficult for traffickers to exploit the situation. Others in the region have taken similar measures.

At this point, our investigators have not yet seen solid evidence of child exploitation or trafficking arising from last month's disaster. And it's important to note that the news accounts, thus far, have been largely anecdotal. However, we know that these criminal activities are already common in many Southeast Asian countries -- as the case of John Seljan illustrated.

The situation in Southeast Asia is an all-too-vivid illustration of the scope of the problem, and how easily these dangerous criminals can prey on the most vulnerable among us, in this case, children who have already been horribly victimized by this natural disaster.

That is why we have directed our attaché officers working in the U.S. Embassies in countries affected by the tsunami to reach out to their counterparts in law enforcement, in government, and in non-governmental organizations to offer assistance. In this way, we

hope that we can shut down any cases of trafficking or exploitation of “tsunami orphans” – or at least have the system in place to respond swiftly should the need arise.

Ultimately, the extensive media attention that has been paid to the plight of these children over the last several weeks may help raise awareness of the global problem of child exploitation and trafficking.

I believe that as parents, social workers, medical professionals, and law enforcement officers, we all recognize the urgent need to fight what President Bush called the “special evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent and vulnerable.”

What I hope you will come away with today is the recognition that at ICE our mission to fight child exploitation continues despite our new name and our place in the new Department of Homeland Security. That the fight is very much a part of our homeland security mission, and that at ICE, with our combined authorities and our focus on Operation Predator, we are even better equipped to carry out the fight against child exploitation. I would like to thank you for hosting us today, and I look forward to working with you in this cause.