



Department of Justice

**STATEMENT OF
FRANCEY HAKES
NATIONAL COORDINATOR FOR CHILD EXPLOITATION, PREVENTION, AND
INTERDICTION**

**BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM, AND HOMELAND SECURITY**

**ENTITLED
“DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING”**

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Statement of Francey Hakes
National Coordinator for Child Exploitation Prevention And Interdiction
Office of The Deputy Attorney General
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September 15, 2010

Good afternoon, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gohmert, and Members of the Subcommittee. As you may know, I am the National Coordinator for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction. I am attached to the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, and I have held this position since January of this year. I am also a federal prosecutor, and have been an Assistant United States Attorney since 2002. Prior to my service in the U.S. Attorney's Office in Atlanta, I was an Assistant District Attorney in Georgia for six years. My very first trial as an ADA was a child exploitation case, and I have specialized in child exploitation for my entire career. It is an honor to appear before the Subcommittee to discuss Department of Justice efforts around the country to prosecute individuals involved in the prostitution of children.

While, unfortunately, children around the world are victimized by various forms of sexual exploitation, my focus today is the commercial sexual exploitation of American children by American citizens occurring solely within our borders. I will be describing for you the efforts being undertaken by the Department of Justice to combat child exploitation in all its forms. As you know, the Department submitted its first-ever National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction to Congress on August 2nd of this year. This National Strategy contains three parts: a comprehensive assessment of the threat child exploitation poses to our children; a review of the current efforts to prevent and interdict child exploitation across the government; and, finally, our comprehensive approach to deterring, preventing, and interdicting these terrible crimes.

The commercial sexual exploitation of American children is a form of human trafficking, and is often prosecuted under the sex trafficking provisions of 18 U.S.C. 1591. Those who sexually exploit children, whether foreign or domestic, for commercial gain, exploit vulnerabilities of their victims. American children are recruited by pimps and madams from all socioeconomic backgrounds and all races. They become victims often because of abandonment, abuse, or unhappiness. The children targeted by pimps and madams typically are runaways, throwaways, or victims of physical or sexual abuse. These vulnerable children are promised stability, love, attention and a home, but find themselves forced into prostitution instead. American pimps and madams can recruit children for nearly nothing, and can easily replace one child with another. They seem to have little fear of law enforcement, confident in their ability to keep their victims from cooperating against them. And, sadly, these pimps and madams are confident that they have customers willing to pay to sexually assault these children.

The Department of Justice is heavily involved in combating this grave and growing problem. While it is difficult to imagine, children as young as 11 years old are targeted for commercial sexual exploitation in the United States. Once in the custody of a pimp, everything the child earns goes to the captor and attempted escapes often result in brutal beatings or even death.

In June 2003, to address the growing problem of commercial sex trafficking of children within the United States, the FBI joined the Department of Justice Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to launch the Innocence Lost National Initiative (ILNI).

Each of ILNI's 38 task forces and working groups throughout the U.S. include federal, state and local law enforcement agencies working in tandem with U.S. Attorney's Offices. Additionally, the program brings state and federal law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and social service providers from all around the country to NCMEC for joint training opportunities.

Task Force operations usually begin as local actions, targeting such places as truck stops, casinos, street "tracks," and Internet websites, 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 other federal prosecutors and federal charges are filed where appropriate.

For its part, the FBI's Crimes Against Children Unit also coordinates a national sting operation to combat domestic sex trafficking of children entitled *Operation Cross Country* multiple times throughout the year. Innocence Lost National Initiative (ILNI) task forces in 38 cities have participated in the operation by targeting venues such as the street tracks, truck stops, motels, and casinos where children are typically prostituted. Every case initiated through the ILNI is reviewed for possible federal violations, and where applicable, cases are presented to the United States Attorney's Office for prosecution.

To date, the ILNI has resulted in nearly 600 convictions at the State and Federal level, and the location and recovery of over 1100 children. Investigative efforts have increasingly resulted in substantial sentences for those convicted, including four life sentences and numerous others ranging from 25-45 years.

One such example, the "*Precious Cargo*" investigation, targeted pimps involved in the sex trafficking of children and adult women to and from the truck stops of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Over 150 victims were identified during the investigation, of which 45 were identified as having been exploited while underage, the youngest of whom was 12 years old. In December 2005, eighteen individuals were indicted for the sex trafficking of children, conspiracy, transportation, and money laundering. In December 2008, Terrance Williams, aka "Sleazy T" was sentenced to

45 years for his role in the enterprise; Eric Hayes, aka "International Ross" to 35 years; and multiple other defendants to sentences exceeding 25 years in length.

These cases require dedication of investigators, victim specialists, and prosecutors as they often turn on the testimony of children who've suffered extreme psychological and physical abuse, who lack supportive family structure, and who may have become forcibly addicted to drugs or alcohol. Corroborating evidence becomes critical due to the pressure on the victim, and sometimes the victim is not willing to cooperate. The FBI and the Department of Justice prosecutors willingly accept these extra burdens to bring to justice offenders who view children as fungible objects to be sold for sex.

As I have noted, gaining the victim's cooperation in these cases can be difficult, and one of the primary reasons is that there is a dearth of services available to these children to keep them available to law enforcement, offer them treatment or a place to live to escape the only life they've come to know. The Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) is now funding three Demonstration Projects that are focused on providing services to domestic children victimized by commercial sexual exploitation. The three awarded programs are Safe Horizon, Inc., in New York, New York; Salvation Army Metropolitan Division in Chicago, Illinois; and Standing Against Global Exploitation – or "SAGE" – Project, Inc., in San Francisco, California. Each program received \$800,000 for 3 years. These projects will, hopefully, identify promising practices in the delivery of a wide array of services to victims, and will lead to a report about the project.

The Department of Justice recognizes that secure housing and specialized services are critical to meet the needs of this unique population of child victims. The housing piece will allow law enforcement to ensure the safety of these children, and to build the necessary rapport and trust to allow the victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of their abusers. Specialized services for these children are also necessary, and must address the full range of trauma experienced by them. These victims are often survivors of sexual abuse even before being recruited by pimps and madams, they have often suffered violence at the hands of their pimps, and certainly by those who paid to assault them, and they may have other conditions, like drug and alcohol addiction, that require these specialized services.

As I mentioned before, the Department of Justice conducted a threat assessment as part of the National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction. This assessment found that there is a lack of definitive data on the scope of this problem, however, there is some scientific research that gives a small picture of the nature of those forced into a life of prostitution. In one study in Chicago, researchers found over half of prostitutes reported engaging in prostitution before they turned 18 years old. In San Francisco, similar research found 78 percent of those engaged in prostitution reported beginning this life as a juvenile, and some 60 percent reported they were 16 or younger.

In FY 2009, the Department of Justice awarded funding under a new program titled, “Improving Community Response to the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children” to Oakland, California, Portland, Oregon, and Miami, Florida. This program focuses on developing a comprehensive community-based approach to domestic commercial sexual exploitation of children. The goal of the program is to enable participating communities to improve their capacity to: recognize exploited youth and youth at risk for exploitation; effectively investigate and prosecute cases against adults who exploit children and youth; and, intervene appropriately with and compassionately serve victims including providing essential services. Additionally, in FY 2010 four awards were made to Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force – affiliated state and local law enforcement agencies to assist them in improving their community’s response to victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

The Department of Justice, recognizing this lack of definitive data on this problem, is funding research to answer these key questions: 1) how many youth under 18 were victims of commercial sexual exploitation in the U.S. in 2008; 2) how many of these victims were known to law enforcement; and 3) how many of these victims were not known to law enforcement. Preliminary results from this study are due in early 2011.

As I noted at the beginning of my remarks, the Department of Justice has recently submitted its National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction to Congress. And, we have begun implementing the goals and priorities contained therein. When we submit our next Report, I expect we will be able to report strong progress in the fight against all forms of child exploitation. As we note in the National Strategy, we are committed to a multi-faceted attack on child sexual exploitation in three forms: prevention, deterrence, and interdiction. Each of these three are critical to our success in this fight. We are engaged with all our law enforcement partners on interdiction efforts, with our community and Agency partners at the Department of Education and others in our prevention efforts, and with the U.S. Marshals Service and others on our deterrence efforts. The message we are sending with our National Strategy is clear: the Department of Justice is fully engaged in preventing, deterring, and interdicting these heinous crimes. Our goal is to prevent exploitation where we can, and to aggressively pursue those who prey on our children with strong enforcement, vigorous prosecution, and serious jail time for those who believe they can harm our children with impunity.