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News Releases

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Human trafficking: 21st century slavery

Forced labor. Prostitution. Child labor. Indentured servitude. Every day, men, women and children around the world are trapped in desperate and dangerous circumstances as a result of human trafficking.

A typical scenario: A young woman is smuggled across the border with the promise of a better life. Upon arrival in the United States, she is forced to work in the sex trade to pay off her smugglers. With no travel or identity documents and unable to speak the language, she is trapped in a nightmare with little hope for escape. In order to hold her in a state of virtual slavery, the traffickers may threaten her and her family with harm should she attempt to flee.

Human trafficking is a tragic, serious cross-border crime, and [ICE is the lead U.S. federal government lead agency \(http://www.ice.gov/pi/investigations/publicsafety/humantrafficking.htm\)](http://www.ice.gov/pi/investigations/publicsafety/humantrafficking.htm) for investigating and dismantling human trafficking organizations.

"One of the most disturbing trends in recent years has been the increasing sophistication of criminal networks when it comes to trafficking in human beings," said Erik Breitzke, who leads ICE's Human Smuggling and Trafficking Unit. "This requires a sophisticated law enforcement response, and no other agency has ICE's combined authorities for enforcing immigration and customs laws, which gives us a set of powerful tools for attacking these organizations.

"We're committed to working with our partners to eradicate this 21st century form of slavery, to holding the traffickers accountable and to getting victims the help they need," Breitzke concluded.

Other ICE activities in combating human trafficking include the following:

- ICE leads the [Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center \(HSTC\)](#), the U.S. government's intelligence fusion center for federal agencies involved in combating human smuggling, human trafficking and

terrorist travel.

- ICE has a strong commitment to training law enforcement and government partners around the world, with training sessions on trends in trafficking, undercover operations and conducting investigations in foreign countries.
- ICE oversees a variety of outreach and public awareness efforts, including the "[Hidden In Plain Sight](http://www.ice.gov/pi/nr/0911/091102washingtondc.htm)" campaign to educate citizens (<http://www.ice.gov/pi/nr/0911/091102washingtondc.htm>) on recognizing the signs of human trafficking and reporting suspected trafficking victims.
- ICE's Victims Assistance Program helps to coordinate services in support of human trafficking victims. In April 2009, ICE was recognized for its commitment to assisting victims of crime with [a Federal Service Award from the U.S. Department of Justice National Crime Victims' Service Awards program](http://www.ice.gov/pi/nr/0904/090424washington1.htm) (<http://www.ice.gov/pi/nr/0904/090424washington1.htm>).

ICE's efforts are getting results: In fiscal year 2009, ICE initiated 566 human trafficking investigations, a 31 percent increase over the previous fiscal year. ICE trafficking investigations in FY09 led to 388 arrests, 148 indictments and 165 convictions.

Learn more about [ICE's commitment to combating human trafficking and smuggling](http://www.ice.gov/pi/investigations/publicsafety/humantrafficking.htm) (<http://www.ice.gov/pi/investigations/publicsafety/humantrafficking.htm>).

-- ICE --

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

ICE comprises four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. For more information, visit www.ICE.gov. To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423.

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