

**TESTIMONY**

**of**

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**for the**

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND RELATED  
AGENCIES**

**“Countering Human Trafficking”**

**February 26, 2014**

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I welcome the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the problem of child sex trafficking in the U.S. We are grateful for the Subcommittee's concern for this insidious threat to our nation's children.

In April of this year, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children ("NCMEC") will commemorate 30 years of operation. In those 30 years, we have answered almost 4 million calls, distributed more than 8 million missing child posters, and helped resolve more than 193,000 cases of missing children -- a resolution rate of 97.8%. This success is a testament to this Subcommittee's commitment to programs that help protect children. Your continued support will allow NCMEC to help thousands more children to come home or escape victimization.

As you know, NCMEC is a private, not-for-profit corporation, designated by Congress and working in partnership with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice. NCMEC is a public-private partnership, funded in part by Congress and in part by the private sector. For almost 30 years, NCMEC has operated under Congressional authority to serve as the national resource center and clearinghouse on missing and exploited children, relying on an annual grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. This statutory authorization (see 42 U.S.C. §5773) specifies 22 operational functions, including:

- operate a national 24-hour toll-free hotline, 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678), to intake reports of missing children and receive leads about ongoing cases;
- operate the CyberTipline, an online reporting mechanism that the public and electronic service providers may use to report Internet-related child sexual exploitation;
- provide technical assistance and training to individuals and law enforcement agencies in the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and treatment of cases involving missing and exploited children;
- track the incidence of attempted child abductions;
- provide forensic technical assistance to law enforcement;
- facilitate the deployment of the National Emergency Child Locator Center during periods of national disasters;

- work with law enforcement and the private sector to reduce the distribution of child pornography over the Internet;
- operate a child victim identification program to assist law enforcement in identifying victims of child pornography;
- develop and disseminate programs and information about Internet safety and the prevention of child abduction and sexual exploitation;
- provide technical assistance and training to law enforcement in identifying and locating non-compliant sex offenders;
- coordinate with child welfare agencies and law enforcement in the reporting of children missing from the foster care system;
- provide technical assistance to law enforcement in identifying, locating and recovering victims of child sex trafficking.

Our longest-running program to help prevent the sexual exploitation of children is the CyberTipline, the national clearinghouse for leads and tips regarding crimes against children on the Internet. It is operated in partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”), the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Homeland Security Investigations (“HSI”), the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the U.S. Secret Service, the Military Criminal Investigative Organizations, the Internet Crimes Against Children (“ICAC”) Task Forces, the U.S. Department of Justice’s Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, and other state and local law enforcement. We receive reports in eight categories of crimes against children:

- possession, manufacture and distribution of child pornography;
- online enticement of children for sexual acts;
- child sex trafficking;
- sex tourism involving children;
- extra familial child sexual molestation;
- unsolicited obscene material sent to a child;
- misleading domain names; and
- misleading words or digital images on the Internet.

These reports are made by both the public and by Electronic Service Providers (“ESPs”), who are required by law to report apparent child pornography to law enforcement via the CyberTipline (18 U.S.C. § 2258A). The leads are reviewed by NCMEC analysts, who examine and evaluate the content, use publicly-available resources to add related information, and provide the report to the appropriate law enforcement agency for possible investigation. These reports are triaged continuously to ensure that reports involving children in imminent danger get first priority.

The FBI, HSI , and U.S. Postal Inspection Service have direct and immediate access to all CyberTipline reports, and each agency assigns agents and analysts to work at NCMEC headquarters. In the 15 years since the CyberTipline began, NCMEC has received and processed more than 2.3 million reports. ESPs have reported to the CyberTipline more than 12 million images/videos of sexually exploited children. The analysts in our Child Victim Identification Program (“CVIP”) have reviewed more than 106 million child pornography images and videos. CVIP assists prosecutors by connecting seized images with the case agent who can identify the child depicted as an actual child, and helps law enforcement to locate and rescue child victims who have not yet been identified. Last week alone, CVIP analysts reviewed more than 387,000 images/videos.

When most Americans hear the term “child trafficking,” they think that it only happens somewhere else, such as Southeast Asia or Central America. Even if they acknowledge that trafficking happens in the United States, they assume the victims are foreign children brought into this country in order to be sold for sex in large cities.

In fact, we have learned that most of the victims of child sex trafficking in our country are American kids – most of whom initially leave home voluntarily as runaways and who end up being trafficked on Main Street, USA. One police officer described it this way: “the only way not to find this problem in any community is simply not to look for it.”

Child sex trafficking occurs every day in every community in the U.S. Mr. Chairman, you recall that Detective Bill Woolf of the Fairfax County, Virginia Police Department helped break up a trafficking ring in your district, in which teenage girls were recruited over social media networking sites and in the halls of their high schools for a life of sex trafficking.

Traffickers also actively target runaway children and then lure them into trafficking using psychological manipulation, illegal drugs and violence. Because of its clearinghouse role, NCMEC knows that many child sex trafficking victims are also missing children. One out of 7 of the endangered runaways reported to NCMEC in 2013 were likely sex trafficking victims. Not only has this number increased from the previous year, it has tripled since we started comparing missing children to trafficked children.

The reluctance of victims to self-identify and the challenges in law enforcement investigations make it very difficult to gauge the incidence of this type of crime. We will never obtain an exact count of child sex trafficking victims unless there is comprehensive, widely-available training on how to properly identify and respond to children who have been victimized through sex trafficking available to law enforcement, child welfare agencies, and medical professionals. This training must be mandated across all law enforcement units, especially for those officers investigating vice and gang-related crimes.

NCMEC believes training is a critical component that should be prioritized. Under a grant from the Justice Department, we recently created a curriculum for Child Sex Trafficking: Awareness & Response (“CSTAR”). The introduction to this course is currently available online to the multiple disciplines that are likely to come into contact with a child sex trafficking victim such as law enforcement, child welfare agencies, NGOs, victim service providers and medical professionals. Recently, the generosity of a private donor allowed us to present the comprehensive course to 43 federal and state law enforcement and prosecutors in Los Angeles. We hope to be able to make this extended course, which contains practical applications of investigation and interviewing techniques, a regular part of our law enforcement training program.

NCMEC’s grant allows us to partner with the Justice Department in its initiatives to combat child sex trafficking, both at the federal and state level.

One component of this partnership is NCMEC’s Child Sex Trafficking Team (CSTT), a specialized group of analysts which handles all law enforcement requests related to child sex trafficking. The CSTT provides comprehensive analytical services to law enforcement investigations, and links cases of possible child sex trafficking victims to missing child cases

known to NCMEC. Reports received by the CyberTipline regarding suspected child sex trafficking are referred to both the ICAC Task Forces and the FBI's Innocence Lost Task Forces. The ICAC Task Force Program is funded by OJJDP and engages in investigations, forensic examinations, and prosecutions related to technology-facilitated sexual exploitation of children and Internet crimes against children. As the crime of child sex trafficking has expanded online, wherever possible the ICACs are a critical part of the response to this crime.

Our Child Sex Trafficking Team also supports the Innocence Lost National Initiative ("ILNI"), in partnership with the FBI and the Justice Department's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section. Created in 2003, this initiative addresses the problem of child sex trafficking through the creation of local and regional task forces and working groups; targeted, coordinated sweeps including Operation Cross Country and the Super Bowl; and ongoing support for trafficking investigations. These 69 dedicated task forces and working groups have recovered more than 3,100 child victims, convicted more than 1,400 pimps and their associates – including 11 life sentences – and disrupted more than 570 criminal enterprises involving child sex trafficking. NCMEC's role in the initiative is to be a clearinghouse for reports involving suspected child sex trafficking; to provide analytical and technical assistance services to law enforcement investigating these cases; and to dedicate case management support for missing children victimized through sex trafficking.

During Operation Cross Country and other targeted sweeps, the CSTT provides 24/7 analytical support and technical assistance. Using donated public records databases and cross-referencing our Missing Children and CyberTipline databases, we provide information on potential child victims, and suspected pimps and their associates, to the Innocence Lost Task Forces through the FBI agents assigned to work at our headquarters.

In August of 2013, during Operation Cross Country VII, CSTT analysts assisted officers in more than 230 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, which led to the rescue of 105 children and the arrest of 150 pimps who are accused of exploiting them. Compared to the Operation in 2012, this was a 32% increase in the number of children recovered and a 43% increase in the number of pimps arrested. Many children rescued during the seven Operations conducted to date had been reported to NCMEC as missing children.

The youngest child rescued in the 2013 Operation was 13 years old.

NCMEC's Critical and Runaway Unit comprises specialized case management teams to handle cases in which the missing child is also a possible child sex trafficking victim. They coordinate the creation and dissemination of posters to generate tips and leads, all of which are sent to the investigating law enforcement agency. NCMEC works closely with approximately 300 corporate photo partners who disseminate photos of missing children to millions of homes across the U.S. every day.

To assist law enforcement during their trafficking investigations, children who are entered into our system are flagged upon intake, increasing the likelihood that they will be treated as victims and not as criminals. This will also trigger the deployment of NCMEC's numerous resources which includes specialized case management services, technical assistance, analytical support, recovery planning, and victim services support. These resources are available at no cost and are used by law enforcement to support their efforts in bringing these children home.

Thanks to our role as the nation's clearinghouse NCMEC is continually expanding our priorities to respond to the evolving threats to children. Because we know children in the foster care system are being targeted by traffickers, NCMEC has streamlined our resources to provide more specialized services to social services and law enforcement with these cases. Of the children reported missing to NCMEC in 2013 who are likely child sex trafficking victims, 67% were in the care of social services or foster care when they ran.

We are encouraged by Congressional action on this issue. Not only did this Congress pass the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, it is currently working on several bills to address critical aspects of this problem, including identifying victims, reporting missing foster children to law enforcement, and prosecuting the customers. When enacted, these bills will greatly assist the work of NCMEC and other programs in the Justice Department.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, the National Center sees the potential for real progress in addressing child sex trafficking in the U.S., thanks in large part to your leadership and continued support. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before your Subcommittee.