



FBI MEDIA RELEASE

Denver Division (serving CO and WY)

Calvin Shivers, Acting Special Agent in Charge

8000 E. 36th Avenue, Denver, CO 80238 | FBI.gov/Denver | @FBI Denver | 303.630.6060

For immediate release

October 18, 2016

Cross Country Operation X recovers 82 children from being trafficked for sex *Local Operation recovers 9 children, arrests 11 traffickers*

DENVER - The FBI's Rocky Mountain Innocence Lost Task Force (RMILTF) and other local law enforcement partners went after sex traffickers who put children up for sale in Colorado and Wyoming last week, arresting 11 pimps and 32 customers, and recovering 9 children.

"Child sex traffickers exploit our kids and crush their hopes, their self-esteem and their futures. They're never the same after being trafficked. Our most important job is to recover them and ensure they have resources moving forward," said FBI Acting Special Agent in Charge Calvin Shivers. "Thanks to our many partners for their collaborative efforts last week, because of their commitment to this operation, many children now have a chance for a better life."

The RMILTF launched an intensive, three-day effort last week at hotels, trucks stops, on street corners and on social media apps to target the traffickers. The youngest child recovered was 14-years-old. This effort was in coordination with the FBI's 10th annual nationwide operation targeting child sex traffickers, known as Operation Cross Country.

In one case, two pimps were caught driving two females, one a juvenile and one an adult, across the Midwest, selling them for sex along the way. When they arrived in Denver, the two victims were advertised on a sex website. Luckily for them, police answered the ad instead of Johns. The men were arrested for Human Trafficking of a Minor for Sexual Servitude.

Victim Advocates provided the juveniles with food, clothing, shelter, medical assistance and connected them with needed resources, such as counseling.

"The satisfaction which today we jointly feel for jobs well done is greatly tempered by the realization that the hard work of ending human trafficking has only begun. Our greatest challenges lie ahead. Tomorrow's prostitutes and sexual victims are today's boys and girls," said 18th Judicial District Attorney George H. Brauchler. "It is for them and their better futures that we will continue to invest time, effort, and resources. To those who view the young and fragile as commodities who seek to profit from sacrificing their innocence and bodies to satisfy the sexual appetites of the lascivious and twisted we say only this: Stop immediately. We are here and we are coming for you."

This year, the RMILTF noticed an increase in the use of dating, meeting and 'hook up' social media apps to exploit and prostitute children. The FBI urges parents to know what your kids are doing online. You can get tips from the [National Center for Missing & Exploited Children](http://NationalCenterforMissing&ExploitedChildren) website and its NetSmartz411 program.

Tragically, it's estimated as many as 2,000 youth in Colorado and Wyoming are exploited sexually every year.

"This task force approach is the only effective way to save children and put these despicable criminals behind bars," said Denver District Attorney Mitch Morrissey. "We know we can make a difference when we put our resources together."

The Colorado & Wyoming operation ranked second in the nation for child recoveries during this year's Operation Cross Country. (Milwaukee took 11 children off the streets, compared to CO/WY, which rescued 9.) Across the two states, more than 280 law enforcement personnel ran 21 stings.

"The Denver Police Department, along with the other law enforcement agencies who participated in Operation Cross Country, are encouraged about the number of children recovered during the operation, but saddened that there are still many out there being victimized," said Denver Police Chief Robert C. White. "We must continue our efforts to bring home others who are victims of these horrible crimes and arrest those who commit them."

The RMILTF includes the FBI Denver Division, the Aurora and Denver Police Departments, the Arapahoe and Douglas County Sheriff's Offices, the Jefferson County District Attorney's Office and the CO State Patrol. Several other local law enforcement agencies participated in this year's Operation Cross Country (see list below.)

In 2015, the crackdown ran for six days and the RMILTF and their law enforcement partners recovered 20 children from sex trafficking, which were the most recoveries in the nation. Nationwide in 2015, 149 underage victims were recovered and 153 pimps were arrested.

From January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2015, the RMILTF arrested 102 people for trafficking and/or pimping-related offenses and 58 people for patronizing a prostituted child and/or sex assault on a child. In all, the RMILTF and other local law enforcement partners have recovered 293 juveniles. (2012-49, 2013-61, 2014-94, 2015-89).

This year's nationwide operation ran Oct. 13th- 15th. For the first time, the operation took place in several countries around the world, including Cambodia, Canada, the Philippines and Thailand. It was conducted by the FBI and 500 law enforcement partners. The operation recovered 82 underage trafficking victims and 239 pimps. Operation Cross Country X is the largest ever in the history of the initiative, with 55 FBI field offices and 71 state and local task forces taking part in the operation in 106 cities across America.

"Operation Cross Country aims to shine a spotlight into the darkest corners of our society that seeks to prey on the most vulnerable of our population," said FBI Director Comey. "As part of this effort, we are not only looking to root out those who engage in the trafficking of minors, but, through our Office of Victim Assistance, we offer a lifeline to minors to help them escape a from a virtual prison no person ever deserves."

The average age that someone gets into the sex trade is 13. Once they are in that world, statistics show they rarely get out. Traffickers can make \$100,000 per year on each child. The pimps coerce, beat and threaten them to stay in the sex trade. The children don't know how to escape. The life expectancy of a prostitute is just seven years.

Operation Cross Country X is part of the FBI's Innocence Lost Initiative, which began in 2003. These teams work all year to recover minor trafficking victims. Since the inception of the program, there have been more than 6100 child identifications and locations.

For additional information on Operation Cross Country X and the Innocence Lost initiative, please visit www.fbi.gov.

Press conference participants:

- Calvin Shivers, Acting Special Agent in Charge FBI – Denver Division
- Ted Mink, Deputy Director, Colorado Bureau of Investigation
- George Brauchler , 18th Judicial District Attorney
- Peter Weir, 1st Judicial District Attorney
- Daniel Steele, Denver Police Department Sergeant & RMILTF Officer

38 law enforcement agencies participated in this year's Operation Cross Country X with the Rocky Mountain Innocence Lost Task Force including:

Adams County District Attorney
Alamosa Police Department
Alamosa Sheriff's Office
Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office
Arvada Police Department
Aurora Police Department
Boulder Police Department
Boulder County Sheriff's Office
Casper Police Department
Cheyenne Police Department
Colorado Bureau of Investigation
Colorado Springs Police Department
Colorado Springs Legal Parole Office
Colorado State Patrol
Commerce City Police Department
Denver Police Department
Douglas County Sheriff's Office
Eighteenth Judicial District Attorney's Office
Evans Police Department
Federal Bureau of Investigation
First Judicial District Attorney's Office

Fruita Police Department
Ft. Collins Police Department
Grand Junction Police Department
Greeley Police Department
Homeland Security Investigations
Jefferson County Sheriff's Office
Johnstown Police Department
Lakewood Police Department
Larimer County District Attorney's Office
Longmont Police Department
Mesa County Sheriff's Office
Ninth Judicial District Office
Pueblo Police Department
Pueblo County Sheriff's Office
Twentieth Judicial District Attorney's Office
U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement
Westminster Police Department
Wheat Ridge Police Department

MEDIA CONTACT:

Deborah Sherman | *Media Coordinator* | FBI Denver Division | O 303.630.6060 | @FBI Denver