

A photograph of a person in a dark hoodie sitting on a bench, looking out a window at a building. The person is in silhouette, and the background shows a building with many windows. The text is overlaid on the image.

# *Heeding a Silent*

CBP takes stand against human

# Cry

trafficking

***Illegal** human trafficking and enslavement is a world-wide problem that has spread to the United States. This woman, in her early 20s, was trafficked into a blue jean sweatshop in Bangkok, Thailand where she and other young women were locked in and made to work 20 hours a day, sleeping on the floor, with little to eat and no pay. She managed to escape and was brought to a shelter. After a few days, when she felt safe enough to tell her story to the director, the police were informed and they raided the sweatshop, freeing 38 girls, ages 14-26. CBP is working to identify individuals entering the U.S. that may be victims of such enslavement.*

**Human smuggling:** a crime involving the movement of a person across a country's border illegally.

**Human trafficking:** any situation where someone is induced by force, fraud or coercion to work for little or no pay or to engage in a commercial sexual act.



Photos by Kay Chernush for the U.S. State Department

**D**esperate for work and a better life, a family travels from Peru to the United States by paying a smuggling organization for illegal visas. These dreams are quickly shattered, however, when the family falls victim to the smugglers and is trapped in a seeming no-way-out nightmare.

Once they arrived in the U.S., their illegal visas were taken by the criminal smuggling organization and they are told that they must work as house cleaners to pay back \$6,000-\$13,000 in new smuggling fees, or else they'll be turned in to the authorities. They receive \$50 per week to "support" the entire family and are forced to live and sleep in a room filled with 10 people and only one mattress.

While the family voluntarily participated in being illegally smuggled across the U.S. border, when they were threatened with the prospect of being arrested if they did not work, they became victims of a worldwide scourge known as human trafficking.

This disturbing scenario is all too real. While most people who enter the United

States illegally are not forced to work against their will, a U.S. government study estimates that as many as 800,000 people are trafficked across national borders each year and 17,500 people are trafficked into the United States from another country.

CBP officers and Border Patrol agents routinely encounter incidents of human smuggling and human trafficking, and it's important to distinguish between them.

#### **Smuggling vs. Trafficking**

An individual may be smuggled and trafficked, just smuggled, or just trafficked—and the CBP officers and agents must distinguish between them.

- **Human smuggling** is a crime involving the movement of a person across a country's border illegally.
- **In human trafficking**, exploitation is the key, not movement. Trafficking can be defined as any situation where someone is induced by force, fraud or coercion to work for little or no pay or to engage in a

commercial sexual act.

"By warning potential victims about human trafficking and educating them about their rights before the exploitation begins, we can save lives," said CBP Commissioner W. Ralph Basham.

Numerous agencies within the U.S. government are engaged in combating human trafficking, most notably Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of State, the Department of Labor, the Department of Defense and the Department of Justice, but CBP plays a unique role because of its position at the borders.

Frontline CBP employees often are the first people to encounter potential trafficking victims as they enter the country. Some who enter the country may not know they are at risk of being enslaved at the time that they cross the border, but CBP employees can educate potential victims about their rights in the United States and can keep an eye out for warning signs.



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As part of a new awareness campaign, CBP employees are attempting to inform travelers who seem like they might be vulnerable to trafficking. CBP is also working to educate the general public to recognize the indicators of human trafficking.

Additional outreach and training activities include the development of an online training course for all CBP employees on identifying human trafficking and information available on the CBP.gov Web site on combating this horrible offense. Each of these tools will better equip CBP employees to identify potential human trafficking victims and to stop the exploitation before it starts.

Law enforcement typically focuses on catching criminals, but CBP is focusing as much on helping victims as on putting the traffickers in jail. This victim-centered approach combined with the agency's role

as the securers of the border give CBP a unique approach to combating modern day slavery. ■

by Laurie Weeks

From left clockwise:

- Much of the world is plagued by the enslavement of children and young adults. In south Asia, entire families can be trapped into a life as carpet weavers when a family member falls into debt.
- Young people looking for a better life in the fishing industry can actually be sold to greedy ship captains.
- State Department estimates are that millions are trapped as sexual slaves worldwide and that they live in such fear they are afraid to seek help.
- Children such as this young girl are prized by exploiters in the carpet industry for their small, fast fingers.