The Routes of Human Suffering: How Point-Source and Destination-Source Mapping Can Help Victim Services Providers and Law Enforcement Agencies Effectively Combat Human Trafficking

Authors : Benjamin Thomas Greer, Grace Cotulla, Mandy Johnson

Abstract : Human trafficking is one of the fastest growing international crimes and human rights violations in the world. The United States Department of State (State Department) approximates some 800,000 to 900,000 people are annually trafficked across sovereign borders, with approximately 14,000 to 17,500 of these people coming into the United States. Today's slavery is conducted by unscrupulous individuals who are often connected to organized criminal enterprises and transnational gangs, extracting huge monetary sums. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), human traffickers collect approximately $32 billion worldwide annually. Surpassed only by narcotics dealing, trafficking of humans is tied with illegal arms sales as the second largest criminal industry in the world and is the fastest growing field in the 21st century. Perpetrators of this heinous crime abound. They are not limited to single or "sole practitioners" of human trafficking, but rather, often include Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCO), domestic street gangs, labor contractors, and otherwise seemingly ordinary citizens. Monetary gain is being elevated over territorial disputes and street gangs are increasingly operating in a collaborative effort with TCOs to further disguise their criminal activity; to utilizing their vast networks, in an attempt to avoid detection. Traffickers rely on a network of clandestine routes to sell their commodities with impunity. As law enforcement agencies seek to retard the expansion of transnational criminal organization's entry into human trafficking, it is imperative that they develop reliable trafficking mapping of known exploitative routes. In a recent report given to the Mexican Congress, The Procuraduría General de la República (PGR) disclosed, from 2008 to 2010 they had identified at least 47 unique criminal networking routes used to traffic victims and that Mexico's estimated domestic victims number between 800,000 adults and 20,000 children annually. Designing a reliable mapping system is a crucial step to effective law enforcement response and deploying a successful victim support system. Creating this mapping analytic is exceedingly difficult. Traffickers are constantly changing the way they traffic and exploit their victims. They swiftly adapt to local environmental factors and react remarkably well to market demands, exploiting limitations in the prevailing laws. This article will highlight how human trafficking has become one of the fastest growing and most high profile human rights violations in the world today; compile current efforts to map and illustrate trafficking routes; and will demonstrate how the proprietary analytical mapping analysis of point-source and destination-source mapping can help local law enforcement, governmental agencies and victim services providers effectively respond to the type and nature of trafficking to their specific geographical locale. Trafficking transcends state and international borders. It demands an effective and consistent cooperation between local, state, and federal authorities. Each region of the world has different impact factors which create distinct challenges for law enforcement and victim services. Our mapping system lays the groundwork for a targeted anti-trafficking response.