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FBI: 79 rescued in child prostitution sweep

By **Stephanie Lambidakis**

(CBS News) The FBI has announced the results of the latest nationwide sweep of prostitution rings that prey on children. Over a three-day period, FBI agents with state and local police officials "rescued" 79 minors and arrested 104 pimps. Acting Executive Assistant Director Kevin Perkins briefed reporters on this sixth deployment of "Operation Cross Country," describing how child prostitution has evolved from a local crime to a nationwide problem dominated by organized crime groups "with a business strategy" that recruit vulnerable children in social media, chat lines and text messaging. **Doing the math, how did any of those pimps make ANY MONEY at all?**

Perkins said the girls are "of tender age, 11, 12 and 13 years," enticed with cell phones and other gifts but also with offers of basic food and shelter. The children soon discover that there is no way out.

"They are told, you can be killed and we can injure your parents. Just like any kind of a hostage, they're being held against their will," Perkins said.

Ernie Allen, President of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which joined the FBI in its announcement, said many communities have turned a blind eye to child prostitution. But Allen says the deployment of 2,500 officers in 57 cities in this operation shows that public attitudes are changing. **So 2,500 cops in 57 cities found a grand total of 79 children? That's 1.3 children per city and 31 law enforcement agents per child.... this would not be considered a successful operation by any other business.** "This is not just a problem on the other side of the world. It is happening in U.S. cities, and average people doing average things can help put an end to it," he said, adding that the FBI's hotline for cyber-crimes has handled 12,000 tips about child trafficking and prostitution.

Allen and Perkins both called for an increase in social services for the prostitutes themselves since many have nowhere to go when they are released from police custody. The FBI's Office of Victim Assistance steps in to help but comprehensive services are needed. Allen said, "these kids are really damaged. They require a specialized kind of help."

He added: "After an earlier operation, I was called by a prosecutor who said, 'I know I'm not supposed to lock her up but my domestic violence shelters won't take her, the runaway shelters won't take her so I have no choice but to put her in secure detention for her own protection.' But our hope is that America is waking up to that." **And while she is in custody there is a good chance that she will be raped by the guards... or other inmates. That's some protection!**

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