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# Combating Human Trafficking with Our Canadian Partners

DIPNOTE: HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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Diplomatic Security Service Special Agent Kate Langston presents at the Sexual Exploitation Training and Awareness Conference in Calgary, Canada, on September 24, 2019. (U.S. Department of State photo)

A violent transnational sex trafficking ring operated for more than twelve years in Houston, Texas. The victims, who were women and underage girls from Mexico, were locked inside rooms, forced to work long hours, forced into prostitution, and abused. Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) Special Agent Kate Langston recounted the details of these crimes for attendees at the second annual Sexual Exploitation Training and Awareness Conference (SETA) in Calgary, Canada, on September 24, 2019. Langston explained how a human trafficking task force of local, state and federal law enforcement agencies worked with local social service organizations to investigate the crimes, rescue the victims, and bring the traffickers to justice.

Our participation at this conference was part of a two-year effort to increase coordination with the Canadian government and non-governmental agencies to raise awareness and address trafficking in persons. Our DSS Regional Security Officer-Investigator serving in Vancouver, initiated U.S. government participation at the conference last year and helped bring together a much larger group this year. Officials

included experts from a variety of government entities such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement/Homeland Security Investigations, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and the Department of State.



Sexual Exploitation Training and Awareness conference presenters and participants in Calgary, Canada, September 24, 2019. (U.S. Department of State Photo)

I am proud to share that U.S.-Canada cooperation on combatting human trafficking did not stop in Calgary.

Following the conference, eleven Canadian law enforcement officials and policymakers traveled to Washington, D.C., New York and Houston to participate in the International Visitor Leadership Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. The group visited the Diplomatic Security Service headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, as well as the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to exchange best practices and investigative resources.

During this exchange opportunity, the Canadian investigators learned about successful trafficking in persons task forces operating across U.S. agencies, as well as criminal investigations that strengthened relationships between host nation partners and DSS special agents serving at U.S. embassies and consulates abroad.





Canadian law enforcement officials and policymakers visit Diplomatic Security Service headquarters to discuss resources to fight human trafficking on October 23, 2019. (U.S. Department of State photo)

During meetings across the nation with local police departments, district attorneys' offices, and non-governmental organizations, participants discussed the importance of establishing formal human trafficking task forces that incorporate proactive involvement of interagency law enforcement partners, prosecutors, and non-governmental victims' support groups.

As a result, we are currently working with U.S. and Canadian counterparts to develop a working group in British Columbia to counter human trafficking. Through this partnership, the working group will raise local awareness about human trafficking, increase training to law enforcement and vulnerable private sector industries, expand information sharing, and increase enforcement actions.



Canadian law enforcement officials and policymakers visit the Diplomatic Security Service Houston Field Office, October 29, 2019. (U.S. Department of State photo)

Canada is just one of many countries working closely with DSS to bolster investigative capacity and increase collaboration to combat human trafficking around the world. Ricardo Colón, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Assistant Director for Domestic Operations said, “While January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, DSS agents across the world are working tirelessly with partner agencies to rescue victims and detect, investigate, and prosecute human traffickers.” Countering trafficking in persons is an effort DSS is proud to continue, alongside our partners, during this month and every day of the year.

*About the Author: Eric Weiner serves in the U.S. Department of State's [Diplomatic Security Service](#).*

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