

INTRODUCTION

The Washington, DC metropolitan area, one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse in the country, is known for its sex trafficking of domestic minors; the role of Central American gangs in trafficking; and the latent problem of domestic servitude among diplomats and international officials. Apart from these distinctive features, Washington, DC and the surrounding metro areas of northern Virginia and Maryland have a full range of human trafficking offenses, touching almost every racial, social, and ethnic

group within this region. Over the last decade, a large and varied NGO sector has emerged that operates both locally and nationally, addressing trafficking within these diverse communities. NGOs cooperate with local law enforcement; state level task forces against human trafficking; and in some cases, advising the U.S. Congress on best practices against human trafficking. Prosecutors employed technology innovatively to infiltrate gangs engaged in human trafficking, rescuing numerous victims and sentencing offenders.

The main efforts against human trafficking include coordination of civil society and federal, state, and local law enforcement through task forces; the presence of an active civil society effort; and an active law enforcement response.

1) Task Forces

Since the passage of human trafficking legislation in the United States, federal resources have become available since 2004 to develop **regional trafficking task forces**. Task forces now exist in Northern Virginia, DC, and Maryland although there is not adequate coordination among these groups across the different jurisdictions of the greater Washington, DC area.

In 2004, the FBI and the Washington, DC Metropolitan Police Department partnered with victims' service providers and NGOs to form the first Washington, DC Human Trafficking Task Force funded by the U.S. Department of Justice. The Northern Virginia Human Trafficking Task Force formed in the same year and has recently received \$1 million from the federal government to train detectives, conduct crime analysis, and provide victim service delivery. The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force was formed later in

2007. It serves as an **umbrella organization of local, state, and federal agencies and private organizations designed to work collaboratively to identify and assist victims of human trafficking** while investigating and prosecuting offenders. It also serves the Maryland suburbs that are part of the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

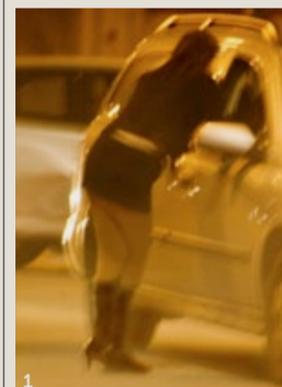
2) Development of NGOs

A diverse range of NGOs exists in the metropolitan area, the largest of which is the **Polaris Project** founded in 2002. The Polaris Project operates the federally funded **National Human Trafficking Resource Center, a national hotline**, and provides service delivery to victims through the previously discussed task forces. The Polaris Project also engages in policy advocacy, training, and technical assistance. Apart from this larger NGO, there are many NGOs that focus exclusively on human trafficking victims or provide assistance to victims along with other services. Many of the most successful NGOs **focus on specific sub-groups within the trafficking population** such as Ayuda that serves the Hispanic community and Courtney's House and FAIR Girls which provide crisis intervention and services to sex trafficking victims. In addition, Boat People

SOS, a national non-profit, works with Vietnamese migrants through legal assistance, emergency housing, education, and medical services. The Multicultural Clinical Center hosts educational training and conducts gang intervention. These NGOs, despite fine service delivery, have faced budgetary challenges in recent years. They also have replicable programs.

3) Law Enforcement

The Northern Virginia area of metropolitan Washington, DC has been among the most successful in the United States in prosecuting serious traffickers with numerous victims. From 2011-2013, there were 24 federal cases against 57 defendants engaged in human trafficking in northern Virginia. Convictions in these cases resulted in sentences ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment and involved at least 38 juvenile victims of sex trafficking; over 350 adult victims of prostitution and sexual exploitation; and 2 adult victims of forced labor. This success in prosecuting human traffickers has been achieved through the **innovative use of technology to understand the mechanisms of trafficking organizations and their networks**. This experience has been shared with other jurisdictions.



CONCLUSION

In Washington, DC, and in other large and diverse metropolitan areas, human trafficking can best be tackled using a regional strategy, combining resources and expertise that represent a varied geographical urban territory. This type of regional approach would be a critical step towards addressing, combatting, and impacting trafficking in larger urban areas in the United States and globally.

CREDITS AND LINKS

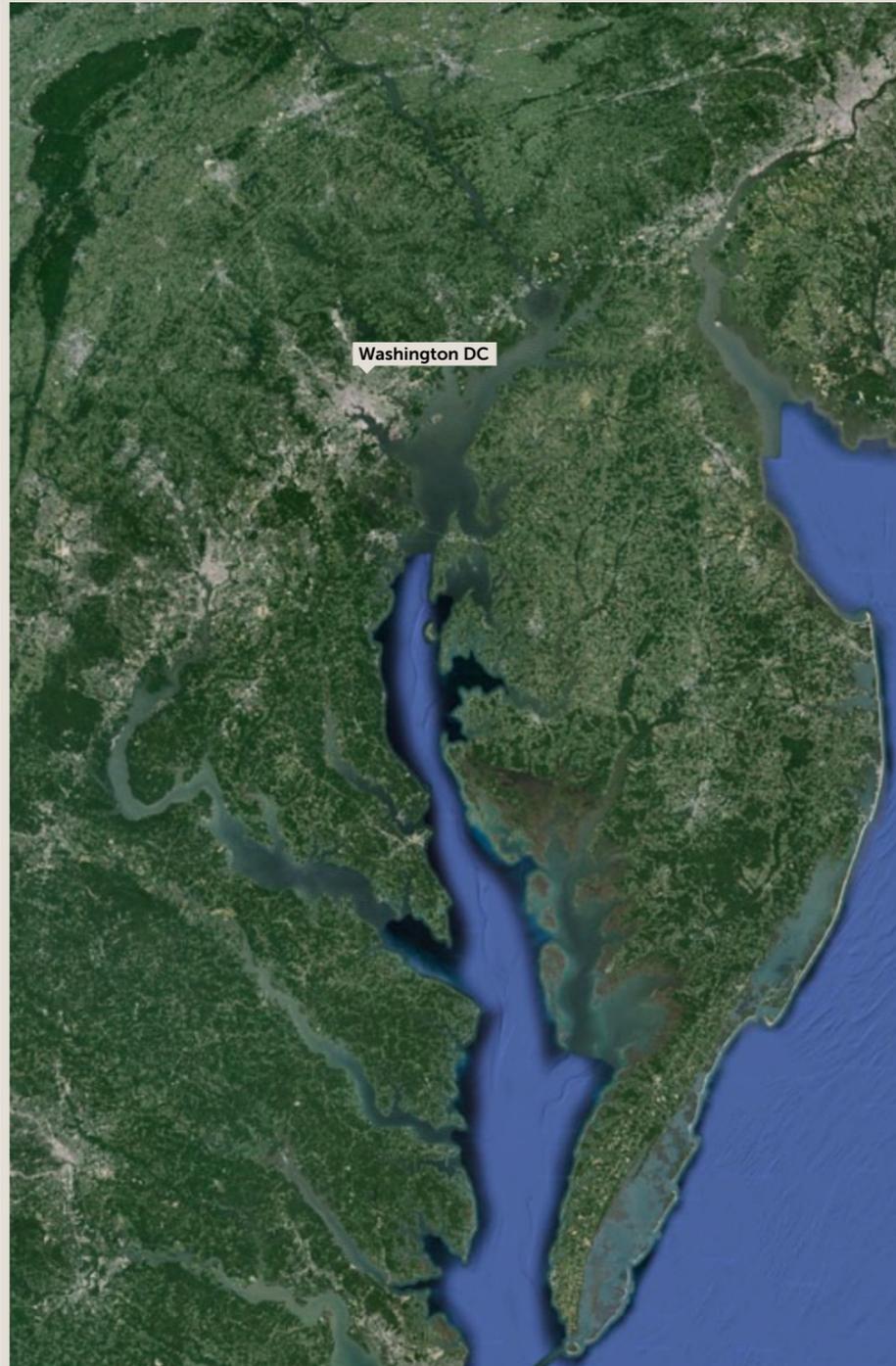
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Washington DC

WASHINGTON DC



COORDINATES
38°53'42.4"N 77°02'12.0"W
 AREA (federal district)
68.3 sq mi
 POPULATION
646,449
 DENSITY
10,528/sq mi

24

federal cases against 57 defendants engaged in human trafficking in northern Virginia from 2011–2013

\$1

million received by The Northern Virginia Human Trafficking Task Force to train detectives, conduct crime analysis, and provide victim service delivery



2



3

Prosecutors employed technology innovatively to infiltrate gangs engaged in human trafficking, rescuing numerous victims and sentencing offenders

SOURCES

Kay Chernush for the U.S. State Department

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WASHINGTON DC, USA

COMBATTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING THROUGH INNOVATION AND IMPACT

In collaboration with MIT

SA+P

senseable city lab:::

