



Highlights of [GAO-07-915](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Human trafficking is a transnational crime whose victims include men, women, and children and may involve violations of labor, immigration, antislavery, and other criminal laws. To ensure punishment of traffickers and protection of victims, Congress passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), which is subject to reauthorization in 2007. The Departments of Justice (DOJ) and Homeland Security (DHS) lead federal investigations and prosecutions of trafficking crimes. As requested, this report discusses (1) key activities federal agencies have undertaken to combat human trafficking crimes, (2) federal efforts to coordinate investigations and prosecutions of these crimes, and (3) how the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) supported federally funded state and local human trafficking task forces. GAO reviewed strategies, reports, and other agency documents; analyzed trafficking data; and interviewed agency officials and task force members.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Attorney General and Secretary of DHS develop and implement a strategic framework to enhance collaboration and the Attorney General direct BJA to develop and implement a plan to help focus technical assistance to the task forces. DOJ and DHS generally agreed with the need for enhanced collaboration, and DOJ identified steps to assist the task forces.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-915.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Robert Goldenkoff at (202) 512-2757 or GoldenkoffR@gao.gov.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

A Strategic Framework Could Help Enhance the Interagency Collaboration Needed to Effectively Combat Trafficking Crimes

What GAO Found

Since the enactment of the TVPA in 2000, federal agencies have (1) investigated allegations of trafficking crimes, leading to 139 prosecutions; (2) provided training and implemented state and local initiatives to support investigations and prosecutions; and (3) established organizational structures, agency-level goals, plans, or strategies. For example, agencies have trained new and current personnel on investigating and prosecuting trafficking in persons crimes through their agency training academies and centers, provided Web-based training, and developed and disseminated guidance on case pursuance. Agencies have also sponsored outreach and training to state and local law enforcement, nongovernmental organizations, and the general public through a toll-free complaint line, newsletters, national conferences, and model legislation. Finally, some agencies have established special units or plans for carrying out their antitrafficking duties.

Federal agencies have coordinated across agencies on investigations and prosecutions of trafficking crimes on a case-by-case basis, determined by individual case needs, and established relationships among law enforcement officials across agencies. For example, several federal agencies worked together to resolve a landmark trafficking case involving over 250 victims. However, DOJ and DHS officials have identified the need to advance and expand U.S. efforts to combat trafficking through more collaborative and proactive strategies to identify trafficking victims. Prior GAO work on interagency collaboration has shown that a strategic framework that includes, among other things, a common outcome, mutually reinforcing strategies, and compatible policies and procedures to operate across agency boundaries can help enhance and sustain collaboration among federal agencies dealing with issues that are national in scope and cross agency jurisdictions.

To support U.S. efforts to investigate trafficking in persons, BJA has awarded grants of up to \$450,000 to establish 42 state and local human trafficking law enforcement task forces. BJA has funded the development of a train-the-trainer curriculum and a national conference on human trafficking and taken further steps to respond to task force technical assistance needs. Nevertheless, task force members from the seven task forces we contacted and DOJ officials identified continued and additional assistance needs. BJA does not have a technical assistance plan for its human trafficking task force grant program. Prior GAO work has shown the need for agencies that administer grants or funding to state and local entities to implement a plan to focus technical assistance on areas of greatest need. BJA officials said they were preparing a plan to provide additional and proactive technical assistance to the task forces, but as of June 2007 had not received the necessary approvals.