

The Honorable Loretta Sanchez (D-CA)
Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism

“Human Trafficking: Recent Trends”

March 19, 2009

Opening Statement, as prepared

I want to especially thank Lieutenant Marsh for making the cross country trip from my home district in Orange County, California to provide his expert testimony on this issue.

The purpose of this hearing is to gain a better understanding of how we can combat human trafficking worldwide and within our borders, and how we can provide assistance and support to victims of human trafficking.

This hearing is timely, given that March is International Women’s month and more than 80 percent of all trafficked people worldwide are women and girls. This issue is close to my heart and I have been a vocal advocate to stop and combat human trafficking.

Several years ago I worked with the Department of Justice and local law enforcement in California to support the creation of the Orange County Counter-trafficking Task Force, which Lieutenant Marsh is representing today.

Furthermore, this weekend I will be hosting a forum on Human Trafficking in my district, and I’m sure that the issues discussed in this hearing will be of great interest to my constituents at that forum.

Last week we held a hearing regarding drug trafficking and violence along the US and Mexico border, but one issue that was not addressed in the hearing was that human trafficking has become a leading source of income for the organized crime syndicates that are inciting violence along the border.

In fact, frequently the same routes used to traffic illegal drugs are also used to traffic humans for sex and labor exploitation. Given that fact, I will be interested to hear from Mr. Kibble on the procedures that are in place to provide assistance to trafficked people who are located at U.S. borders.

As the representative of the largest Vietnamese population outside of Vietnam I have been very concerned about the fact that most human trafficking victims originate in Asia.

I am looking forward to learning more about what is being done globally by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and how that impacts us locally and at the U.S. borders.

I believe one important step was the creation of the multi-agency Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center that facilitates cooperation between elements of the Departments of Homeland Security, State, and Justice.

I am pleased with the cooperation between federal agencies on this issue and I would like to hear more about the role of local task forces and non-governmental organizations in the work of the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center.