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OPERATION PENTAMETER 2 EXPOSES HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The police service in Scotland has played a significant role in a six-month, nation-wide operation against human trafficking.

Operation Pentameter 2 particularly focused on Human Trafficking for sexual exploitation. It was launched in October 2007, and has resulted in Scottish police forces making a major contribution to intelligence gathering which saw 351 individuals initially dealt with as victims of human trafficking throughout the UK, with 59 of them in Scotland.

Through extensive co-operation with other UK police forces and partner agencies, Scottish police forces have provided intelligence reports that have also assisted other forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It has been reported that many of the victims were from southeast Asia.

“Operation Pentameter 2 has shown that there are criminals engaged in human trafficking throughout Scotland,” said Detective Superintendent Michael Orr of Strathclyde Police, Chair of the Scottish Human Trafficking Group.

“We had a high number of intelligence reports submitted by Scottish officers that showed significant connections and links with what was being uncovered in other parts of the UK,” Mr. Orr explained. “This shows, as we suspected, that this form of criminality is organised in a fashion that is not dissimilar to what is evident in say the drugs trade, with UK and worldwide networks and links.”

Human trafficking not only includes bringing people into the UK but soliciting UK citizens as well for purposes of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and domestic servitude.

Scottish police visited over 50 premises throughout the country which included 43 residences and 11 massage parlours.

“During the six-month operation, 35 suspects were arrested in Scotland for a variety of offences and, in some cases, cash was seized from these premises,” Detective Superintendent Orr added.

“Operation Pentameter 2 has provided the Scottish police forces and their partner agencies, including the Scottish Government, with a greater knowledge of the threat.” Mr. Orr explained.

“It has shown that the integrated partnership approach to law enforcement and victim care has placed Scotland in a good position to continue to identify, arrest and bring to justice, those who are involved in this despicable form of human slavery.

“There is no doubt, however, that we still have much work to do to create the fullest possible understanding of the scale of trafficking in Scotland as a whole and to enable us to identify the crime groups behind it. Of equal, if not greater priority is for us to develop a cohesive plan of victim engagement to ensure that all potentially trafficked victims are shown the highest level of support from the police and key partners. Establishing and developing trust with victims is on occasions extremely difficult, but is key to future progress,” he stressed.

“And we also need a high level of support and assistance from the general public if we are going to continue to make progress.”

Cabinet Secretary for Justice Kenny MacAskill said:

“The Scottish Government is committed to tackling the appalling trafficking in human beings and the misery it causes.

“Pentameter 2 is a vital part of the on-going battle against this despicable ‘trade’, with police raids across Scotland having discovered 59 potential victims, 15 of those believed to have been trafficked for sexual exploitation.

“There are clear links between human trafficking, and other forms of organised crime. This operation shows how, through improved intelligence and close partnership working, we can deliver trafficking victims from misery and help make our communities safer and stronger as a result.

“We have also updated the joint UK Action Plan on Human Trafficking, making clear that we will continue to support law enforcement agencies to identify and pursue the criminal gangs involved and to work with local authorities and voluntary bodies to ensure that victims can get the support they need.”

Nick Kinsella, Head of the UK Human Trafficking Centre, said:

“Pentameter 2 has been a great success and now the results need to be analysed in depth, to see what we have actually found. This operation was one of many strands of activity that are taking place in the UK or being led by UK law enforcement internationally, to combat the trafficking of human beings.

“The results from P2 highlight that great steps have been taken to tackle the trafficking of human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation. We need to build on what we have learnt and take this momentum forward. The UKHTC will continue to coordinate for the service in this regard, and with its partners will continue to take forward a diverse range of programmes to ensure that the UK becomes a hostile environment for traffickers.”

Members of the public should continue to be vigilant for the signs of human trafficking and if anyone has information about trafficking they should ring their local police force or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or in an emergency they should dial 999.

New measures to tackle trafficking and support victims are published today in an update of the UK Human Trafficking Action Plan, first published last year. In reviewing the strategy new areas and opportunities were identified to combat trafficking and lead to 23 new actions being added.

The Government is committed to putting victim care and protection at the heart of it, and as a result new actions include granting victims of trafficking an initial 45 day stay in the UK followed in many cases by a further new one year temporary residency permit. Both measures go further than the minimum standards outlined in the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking.

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Background:

Pentameter 2 was a joint ACPOS/ACPO-led, multi-agency national campaign of activity to tackle human trafficking for sexual exploitation throughout the UK.

The operation involved 55 forces throughout the United Kingdom and has been a catalyst to promoting the effective policing of human trafficking into core police business. It was the second multi-agency co-ordinated campaign of activity to tackle the trafficking of human beings.

Pentameter 1 was held in 2006 and was the first proactive policing operation to simultaneously involve all 55 forces in the UK that resulted in the establishment of the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) in Sheffield. This operation resulted in 88 victims of trafficking from 22 different countries (primarily Eastern Europe, China/South-East Asia, Africa or Brazil) being recovered with 232 people being arrested and 134 charged with a variety of offences.

Operation Pentameter 2 was linked to an initiative in a number of EU countries being led by the UK and Poland under the auspices of G6.

The operation was subdivided into four distinct phases, which involved set-up, preparations, operational delivery and review.

It had a number of strategic aims, which will help to deliver key objectives in the UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking:

- rescuing and protecting victims;
- arresting, disrupting and bringing to justice offenders;
- pursuing the financial assets of traffickers;
- improving our knowledge about the nature and scale of human trafficking in the UK; and
- maintaining and enhancing existing good work to tackle this area of criminality.

There was particular emphasis on understanding the nature and extent of trafficking for sexual exploitation, the involvement of organised crime groups and attacking the assets of such groups.

During the summer of 2007, over 500 officers and staff were briefed in a very comprehensive manner by the co-ordination team and representatives from other key agencies, including the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency (SCDEA), UKHTC, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Serious and Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Home Office, UK Borders Agency (UKBA).

UKP2 involved the largest ever use of the HOLMES 2 computer system, which was used to manage an extensive national intelligence database in order to support operational activity. This provided for a better understanding of the nature and extent of the organised crime associated with human trafficking activities. Intelligence was also shared with Europol.

Pentameter 2 was about serious and organised crime and was committed to tackling the huge profits that are being made by those involved at local, national and international levels. As such, investigations under P2 had an asset recovery element, using the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) to look at criminal lifestyle offences, civil recovery, forfeiture, confiscation, taxation offences, and money laundering.