

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEPARTMENTS OF JUSTICE, HOMELAND SECURITY AND LABOR ANNOUNCE SELECTION OF PHASE II ANTI-TRAFFICKING COORDINATION TEAMS

The U.S. Departments of Justice, Homeland Security and Labor announced today the selection of six new Anti-Trafficking Coordination Teams. These teams will lead Phase II of the ACTeam Initiative, an interagency effort to streamline federal criminal investigations and prosecutions of human trafficking offenses.

The six new ACTeams will be based in Cleveland; Minneapolis; Newark, New Jersey; Portland, Maine; Portland, Oregon; and Sacramento, California. Each team will serve under the leadership of the local U.S. Attorney and the highest-ranking federal investigative agents in the regional field offices of the FBI, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Department of Labor.

“Human trafficking robs victims of their liberty, exploits them for labor and for sex, and infringes not only on their rights, but on their essential humanity,” said Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch. “Through the ACTeam Initiative, we are harnessing resources across the federal government to ensure that our multi-agency fight against human trafficking is as comprehensive and effective as possible. In the days and months ahead, the Department of Justice will continue to work alongside our federal partners to prosecute wrongdoing, support survivors, and bring this devastating crime to an end.”

“The Anti-Trafficking Coordination Team (ACTeam) Initiative is an important tool in our collective ability to combat sex trafficking, forced labor and domestic servitude here in the United States,” said Secretary Jeh C. Johnson of Homeland Security. “It highlights our commitment to increase capacity to rescue victims and bring perpetrators of these terrible crimes to justice. Our collective efforts are amplified when we work together in furtherance of shared missions like this. And, through DHS’s Blue Campaign, we will remain focused on ending human trafficking in the United States.”

“A trafficking victim shouldn’t have to spend time trying to determine whether they have a Department of Labor issue or a Department of Justice issue,” said Secretary Thomas Perez of the Department of Labor. “Their basic rights are being violated, and we can accomplish so much more to redress those crimes when we work together. The Anti-Trafficking Coordination Team Initiative, by bringing our respective departments’ collective resources and expertise to bear, is helping us build a whole even greater than the sum of our individual parts.”

“Human trafficking is a modern day form of slavery that destroys lives and exploits the most vulnerable in our society,” said Director James B. Comey of the FBI. “These Anti-Trafficking Coordination Teams are the most effective way to investigate human trafficking by allowing us to work in a collaborative, victim-oriented manner.”

The new teams were selected by unanimous consensus of the Federal Enforcement Working Group after a rigorous, competitive and nationwide selection process. The group includes subject matter experts from the Department of Justice (including the Civil Rights Division’s Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit, the Executive Office of U.S. Attorneys and the FBI’s Civil Rights Unit); the Department of Homeland Security (including ICE and Homeland Security Investigations’ Human Smuggling and Trafficking Unit); and the Department of Labor (including the Office of the Inspector General and the Wage and Hour Division).

The new ACTeams will collaborate with the human-trafficking subject matter experts in the Federal Enforcement Working Group to implement a strategic action plan in their respective districts. Over the next two years, teams are expected to develop high-impact federal investigations and prosecutions, dismantle human-trafficking networks, vindicate the rights of human-trafficking victims and bring traffickers to justice.

Launched in 2011 by the Attorney General and Secretaries of Labor and Homeland Security, the ACTeam Initiative established six Phase I ACTeams in Atlanta; El Paso, Texas; Kansas City, Missouri; Los Angeles; Memphis, Tennessee; and Miami. In these ACTeam districts, prosecutions of forced labor, international sex trafficking and adult sex trafficking rose even more markedly than they did nationally. For instance, the number of defendants convicted rose 86 percent in ACTeam districts, compared to 14 percent in non-ACTeam districts, and 26 percent nationwide. Based on this demonstrated record of success, Attorney General Lynch, Labor Secretary Perez and Homeland Security Secretary Johnson launched Phase II of the ACTeam Initiative earlier this year. The fight against human trafficking remains a top priority for the three officials and they have committed to collaborating with other governmental and non-governmental partners to continue to enhance their anti-trafficking efforts.

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