n mid-April, the world heard the news that the terrorist group Boko Haram had abducted more than 300 Nigerian school girls. Shortly afterward, a video of the group’s leader revealed his plans: “I will sell them in the market....There is a market for selling humans.”

Armed conflicts, kidnappings and terrorism have unfortunately become regular news, but “selling humans” is a concept alien to most in the Western world. Boko Haram’s announcement that it will sell the girls reminds us of a dreaded disease for which we found the cure long ago. Unfortunately human trafficking, together with its corresponding cruel and unfair treatment of people, has flared again from embers we thought were cold and dead. It will take the vigilance of a civilized public and its law enforcement community to stamp out the blaze and keep the future of humanity on the right path.

What Law Enforcement Should Understand about Human Trafficking

First and foremost, human trafficking is not legal anywhere in the world. When someone takes control of another person physically, psychologically, financially or emotionally and requires them to work or prostitute themselves, without proper compensation, for the benefit of someone else, it is enslavement.
nail salons, shops, factories, slaughterhouses, brothels and in domestic situations in private homes. They live in large cities, small towns, suburban neighborhoods and rural areas. The FBI notes that human sex trafficking and sex slavery happen throughout the U.S., right in citizens’ backyards, including those in upscale neighborhoods right in our nation’s Capitol. According to a 2013 Congressional Research Service Report cited by NBC News, as many as 100,000 U.S. children may be victims of domestic human trafficking. The report also estimates that traffickers bring about 17,500 victims into the U.S. each year. Polaris Project CEO Bradley Myles noted in an interview with NBC News: “The average American should understand that human trafficking is much larger and more prevalent than most people realize, and they may come across human trafficking in their daily lives.”

3. Why does human trafficking take place?

Human trafficking, a form of organized crime, takes place because people can profit from those who are most vulnerable and the risks involved are minor relative to other illegal, large-scale crimes, such as the distribution of illegal drugs. There is a demand for inexpensive food, clothing, electronics and other products and also for commercial sex; forced labor and sex trafficking allow these demands to be met. Communities, including many in law enforcement, are often unaware of the problem because they simply can’t imagine it happening in their neighborhoods and don’t know how to recognize it. Unfamiliarity with trafficking laws or failure to realize that the promised job does not exist. Rather, the victims are forced to work until a debt of some kind is repaid. The traffickers maintain control over their victims through intimidation, including threats of violence; actual physical abuse; threats to harm their families; or threats to expose the immigration status of either the victim or the victim’s family. In the case of “debt bondage,” traffickers inform the victims they have to work until a debt of some kind is repaid. The traffickers often capitalize on the victims’ fear of law enforcement or other officials who would actually be able to help them. This psychological manipulation is often made easier by malnutrition, physical abuse, forced drug use and/or even the victims’ general confusion about where they are.

4. Who profits from human trafficking?

According to the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, the trafficking of human beings is tied with arms dealing as the second largest criminal industry in the world, and is the fastest growing. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center estimates that human trafficking is a $32 billion industry, with half of this money coming from industrialized countries. Those profiting from it include organized criminal groups, terrorist groups, and individuals who prey on the most vulnerable people. In some cases, a cruel cycle exists where terrorists kidnap victims during armed conflicts and sell them to fund future attacks and additional kidnappings.

5. Who are the victims?

The victims of human trafficking are often disadvantaged members of society. They may be poor, victims of wars or armed conflicts, undocumented immigrants, children, and/or the unschooled. The majority of those exploited are women and children; the U.S. Department of State’s Trafficking in Persons Report estimates that 50% are under 18. Men are also victims of both sexual exploitation and forced labor. Trafficked victims also include members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community.

6. How does it happen?

Victims of human trafficking are often the most at-risk members of society. In order to gain control of the victims, traffickers take advantage of their vulnerabilities. For instance, many victims seek a better life through employment and/or immigration. Traffickers may offer a job with good pay in a location far away. Once there, the traffickers take control of the individuals’ passports, other identification and cell phones and the victims begin to realize that the promised job does not exist. Rather, the victims are forced to work in horrible conditions, possibly in agricultural fields, factories, slaughterhouses or private homes, sometimes for 12 hours or more, each day, seven days a week. Or the victims may be forced to prostitute themselves to as many as 6-10 customers each day, seven days a week. Once enslaved, traffickers maintain control over their victims through intimidation, including threats of violence; actual physical abuse; threats to harm their families; or threats to expose the immigration status of either the victim or the victim’s family. In the case of “debt bondage,” traffickers inform the victims they have to work until a debt of some kind is repaid. The traffickers often capitalize on the victims’ fear of law enforcement or other officials who would actually be able to help them. This psychological manipulation is often made easier by malnutrition, physical abuse, forced drug use and/or even the victims’ general confusion about where they are.

What Law Enforcement Can Do to Combat Human Trafficking

Law enforcement stands on the front line of the fight against human trafficking. Law enforcement investigators, and even patrol officers on the street, may encounter victims and traffickers while performing their routine duties, without realizing it. Knowing how to distinguish a victim of trafficking from a person knowingly engaging in criminal activity may help to uncover an organized human trafficking operation. Identification is just the first step, however. To create an effective case against traffickers, officers must win the trust of victims who have often been repeatedly warned that authorities will jail, deport or abuse them.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance maintains an online guide titled the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force Strategy and
NW3C offers two online courses on human trafficking: Human Trafficking Awareness for Law Enforcement Officers and Human Trafficking Awareness for West Virginia Law Enforcement Officers.

Human Trafficking Awareness for Law Enforcement Officers is an interactive, online course designed to provide law enforcement with a basic overview of human trafficking. It provides information about the roles of individuals involved in human trafficking, physical and behavioral indicators and the rights of trafficked victims. It also gives an overview of several federal and private organizations and their efforts to combat human trafficking.

Human Trafficking Awareness for West Virginia Law Enforcement Officers provides information similar to the class described above, but also includes detailed information on West Virginia’s human trafficking statute.

In each of these online courses, short pre- and post-tests are administered. Upon successful completion of the post-test, the person is provided a certificate of completion. The entire course, including the short tests and the course evaluation takes approximately 75 minutes to complete.

NW3C offers these courses to law enforcement at no cost to officers or their agencies.

For more information and to register, please visit: http://www.nw3c.org/training/online-training.

Operations e-Guide. The guidelines posted below are reprinted from this resource. They provide sound practices for law enforcement interviewing trafficked victims.

- Do not use interrogation methods.
- Be sure the victim has some control in the situation (breaks, water, seating placement).
- Due to fear and possible trauma on the part of victims, it is best to use a conversational approach rather than a rapid series of questions in order to obtain preliminary information. Victims need to feel safe at all times.
- It can be very helpful to have trusted victim service providers conduct a parallel interview as they can assist in reducing the victim’s fear of law enforcement. They will not be gathering the facts of the crime, but will be assessing practical needs of the victim.
- Remember that open-ended questions will elicit more information from victims than those answerable with a yes or no.
- Be aware of cultural considerations of gender, subject matter, and narrative style. Some cultures reveal a story in a circular rather than linear manner, and law enforcement must exercise patience and understanding.
- Refrain from physical contact with victims.
- It will take time and trust to elicit the facts of a case.

This online resource also notes: “The effects of trauma can influence behavior of a victim during an interview. Memory loss, lack of focus, emotional reactivity, and multiple versions of a story can all be signs of trauma exhibited during interviews. Interviewers should be familiar with the signs of trauma and not assume the victim is evading the truth.”

To view this online e-Guide, please visit: https://www.ovcttac.gov/TaskForceGuide/EGuide/.

Additional online resources include the following (click the bulleted items to be directed to the referenced resource):

- U.S. State Dept. Trafficking in Persons Report - 2013 version - 2014 version
- FBI site providing excellent tips for patrol officers and investigators
- Department of Homeland Security’s Blue Campaign: Advice for Law Enforcement
- One Local Law Enforcement’s Response to the Problem
- Interactive website shows how consumer choices impact modern slavery
- Website dedicated to ending slavery
What the Public Can Do to Help Combat Human Trafficking: See Something, Say Something

By Kim Williams

Citizens can play a key role in preventing and stopping human trafficking, if they understand what it is, are aware of their surroundings, react to their gut instincts, and speak up when they see suspicious activity or persons. Anyone can report a suspected trafficking case. In addition to those in law enforcement, other professionals likely to encounter victims include those in healthcare or social work.

 Trafficking is happening in cities, towns and suburban neighborhoods, throughout the United States. Victims of labor trafficking can be found in factories, on farms, in slaughterhouses, in private homes serving as nannies or maids, at construction sites, and in restaurants, shops, or hair and nail salons. Sex trafficking victims may be forced to work in massage parlors, modeling studios, bars and strip clubs or through escort services. Traffickers often advertise their victims’ services over the Internet.

Indications of trafficking include the following:

- There may be heavy security at a residence or work site, including barred windows, electronic surveillance and guards.
- Victims often live where they work. If they leave the premises, an escort or guard accompanies them.
- At a doctor’s office or any public place, victims are accompanied by an escort of some type. The escort often translates or speaks for them.
- Victims may appear to be malnourished, have poor personal hygiene and/or have bruises or signs of physical mistreatment.
- Victims often appear frightened, anxious or submissive, avoiding eye contact.
- Victims may be disoriented or seem confused. They may not know what city they are in or to where they are traveling.
- Victims have few, if any, personal belongings. Someone else is usually in control of their passports, identification and money.

If you believe you have observed a situation that could be trafficking, report the incident immediately to your local law enforcement agency. You could save a life and help combat modern day slavery, as well.

Additional information is available at:
http://www.humantrafficking.org
http://humantraffickingmovie.com