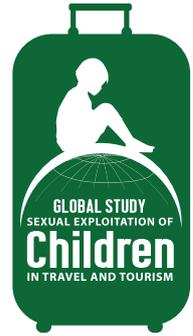


# ANGELWATCH

## U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT HOMELAND SECURITY INVESTIGATIONS



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

## INTRODUCTION

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative agency within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) is the directorate within ICE responsible for the investigation of illicit trade, travel and finance. HSI has over 6,000 criminal investigators and 200 offices in all 50 U.S. states as well as more than 60 offices in over 45 countries.

HSI is a primary U.S. law enforcement agency investigating transnational child sexual abuse and conducts investigations throughout the United States and with foreign partners overseas. ICE HSI arrests over 2,000 individuals annually for crimes involving sexual abuse of children.

ICE HSI also investigates U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents who travel to a foreign country for the purpose of engaging in illicit sexual conduct with minors.

### **HSI's Cutting Edge Programme Using Technology to Deter Child Sex Tourism**

HSI developed Operation Angel Watch to proactively identify individuals travelling to foreign countries who have been convicted of a sexual crime against a child.

Under Operation Angel Watch, HSI and its sister agency, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, partner to identify passengers travelling from the United States abroad to identify those registered sex offenders with convictions for crimes against children. Such individuals are tentatively identified as Travelling Child Sex Offenders (TCSOs).

Once identified, and travel arrangements are confirmed, the passenger's information is shared through HSI's extensive attaché network with law enforcement in the arrival country for appropriate action.

Between 1 October 2013 and 30 September 2014, Operation Angel Watch notified more than 100 countries of the arrival of over 2,200 travelling child sex offenders. Approximately 500 of these were denied entry by the arrival country. Some countries, considered high-risk for sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism, had correspondingly high rates of travel by TCSOs during this same period. For instance, Mexico had 757 TCSOs reported with 215 denied entries, while 212 TCSOs were reported to The Philippines with 125 denied entries.

### **Strengths of Operation Angel Watch**

The sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism exists, despite the despicable nature of the sexual activity that harms children, because of profits earned by criminals. If the criminal profit can be reduced or eliminated, the horrendous crimes could be as well.

Operation Angel Watch produces information that could reduce the criminal profit from child sex tourism because the information may result in denial of entry for a TCSO into a high-risk country or, at a minimum, greater scrutiny of the TCSO's intentions by the arrival country. It is quite likely the Operation has had a deterrent impact on the decision of a TCSO to engage in sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.

Operation Angel Watch relies on reliable data systems to observe the potential international travel of convicted child sex offenders. These data systems are populated by passenger lists, which are run through a series of automated and manual queries, to include open source sex offender registries as well as local, state and federal criminal conviction information maintained by law enforcement. Operation Angel Watch is managed by intelligence analysts and criminal investigators working at the HSI Child Exploitation Investigations Unit.

### **Limitations of Operation Angel Watch**

Advanced passenger information may not always be provided with sufficient time to conduct in-depth analysis of a TCSO. Occasionally, these timeline constraints may delay the notification process and result in information not being provided to the destination country with sufficient time prior to the TCSO's arrival.

Criminal terms can differ from one country to another. A legal description of a child sex offence in a local jurisdiction in the United States may not compare with similar conduct in another country. The lack of harmonious language in child sex convictions amongst countries can make determinations of the underlying conduct difficult for law enforcement in the arrival country.

### **Country Responses to Operation Angel Watch**

Countries are continuously developing responses to referrals under Operation Angel Watch, particularly as the Operation is outlined for relevant authorities. ICE HSI has never requested any particular response, such as denial of entry for a TCSO, but rather only that the foreign government understand the nature of the information being provided and take action as deemed appropriate under the laws of that country.

### **Recommendations for Improvement**

ICE HSI would welcome the sharing of TCSO information from foreign countries with citizens travelling to or transiting through the United States. The sharing of this information could be a significant step in reducing sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism worldwide.

© ICE HSI

## **Contact**

Global Study Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism  
Email: [globalstudysectt@ecpat.net](mailto:globalstudysectt@ecpat.net)  
Website: [globalstudysectt.org](http://globalstudysectt.org)