



Tool 5.5 Disruptive investigation

Overview

This tool looks at some of the main disruptive options available to law enforcement agencies.

Where neither the reactive nor the proactive approach is possible, it may be useful for law enforcement personnel to resort to a number of tactics to disrupt human trafficking operations and force traffickers to reveal themselves.

General principles of the disruptive investigative option

The use of the disruptive option may be appropriate in a variety of circumstances:

- Where the level of risk to the victims demands an immediate response that precludes the proactive option but may require an immediate intervention and disruption thereafter
- Where the proactive option is not viable for operational reasons, such as where geographical and/or topographical features make surveillance on target premises impracticable, or where it is impossible to achieve undercover penetration of the network
- Where legislative, procedural or resource implications preclude the use of proactive tactics
- Where the disruptive option provides a faster response to specific complaints from local residents or other interested groups

Irrespective of why the disruptive option may be the most appropriate response under certain circumstances, two key points should be noted. Firstly, disruption may temporarily relieve the situation, but it does not provide a solution and will only displace the problem to another location. Secondly, the key to success with the disruptive option is the use of creative and innovative multi-agency tactics to create so many daily problems as to make it virtually impossible for the traffickers to continue to operate in their current format and location.

There are a number of multi-agency partners that can be harnessed to the disruption effort (the list is not exhaustive): local police agencies; immigration services; customs agencies; ministries of foreign affairs, health, environment and labour; fire services; local municipal authorities; airlines and other carriers.

Areas for disruption

Whatever type of disruptive tactic is deployed, the following four important points should be noted regarding this type of activity:

- Disruptive tactics are aimed across a wide front. They may result in complaints by some individuals (e.g. advertisers, property agents or travel agents) about intimidation or improper use of legislative powers. This may occur because the net effect upon them of compliance with law enforcement instructions will be an economic one—it may cost them business. The response to these complaints if they arise is straightforward: the crime of trafficking is a grave abuse of the human rights of the victims and it is the duty of law enforcement agencies to utilize all possible legal means to disrupt and reduce it.
- If time permits, disruptive activity should be conducted on an incremental basis. It is usually better to seek cooperation in the first instance. If this fails to produce the required result, the disruption can be increased incrementally to reinforce the message.
- Disruption does not always achieve the desired outcome on the first occasion and may have to be repeated. It is important to have detailed records of what has already taken place in order to strengthen the message if it has to be repeated.
- Disruptive activity always creates intelligence opportunities, so it is important to ensure that all available intelligence is captured and properly recorded. It may become the basis of proactive operations at a later date.

A further measure that can lead to disruption is the use of education programmes. Education campaigns as such are purely preventive measures designed to achieve long-term benefits by educating potential victims of the risks inherent in the crime of trafficking, but they can also play a vital role in disruptive activity in certain circumstances. It may be possible to establish liaison with the organization conducting a programme (e.g. a non-governmental organization carrying out a campaign) in order to include current thematic intelligence and facts in the programme content.