



Join Operations Destroys International Trafficking Ring

“We just do it because we wanna help trafficking victims. And that's one of the things that the authorities really appreciate about Destiny Rescue.”

Esmerelda called her parents, desperate for help.

She'd taken a dream job in the Dominican Republic; the company even paid for her plane ticket to fly her in from her home in Colombia. But upon landing, that dream quickly became a nightmare.

Her “employers” promptly confiscated her passport and abducted the young woman, threatening violence if she resisted. She was taken to a hotel and told she'd accrued a hefty debt for her travel expenses. To pay off that fake debt used as debt bondage, she was forced into sexual exploitation.

She was professionally photographed and added to a catalog of other victims so that sex buyers could choose the girl they'd like to purchase for an evening. The traffickers shuffled her and the others between clubs and bars, where they offered the captive women for sale. During it all, the criminals used various forms of manipulation to keep the women

compliant. “They (the traffickers) had to use a love drug in order for them to stay in such a horrible situation,” Jacob, one of our local agents, said.

Despite being constantly under guard any time she wasn’t being sold for sex, Esmerelda managed to get a call out to her family.

When her family heard about her plight, they were horrified. They quickly called the Colombian Embassy in the Dominican Republic to ask for help. The embassy contacted local law enforcement and asked that they open a case to find the trafficked woman.

And they called us.

A rescue and a revelation

Esmerelda gave her family enough information for us to locate her fairly quickly, so we joined the police on a rescue operation. The raid was a success, and Esmerelda was rescued. Unfortunately, the traffickers spotted officers just before they moved in, slipping away before they could be arrested.

Now that she was safe, Esmerelda was eager to help catch the criminals who’d caused her so much pain. Interviews with the young woman were illuminating. As she discussed everything she’d endured, one thing became clear; **this was no small-time operation**. Esmerelda described a

complex, well-connected syndicate with multiple locations and means of exploitation.

Our team got to work. Because the traffickers spotted local police on the initial raid, they'd need to use unorthodox methods to avoid detection this time around. Fortunately, Esmerelda's testimony enabled us to obtain special permission from a judge to bolster the investigation. **We began intercepting phone calls** from key players that Esmeralda identified from her time under traffickers' control.



An undercover surveillance photo of a victim with perpetrators

Those calls helped us uncover more about the criminal network. Our investigators went undercover, posing as local delivery drivers or foreign sex buyers to confirm the physical location of the trafficker's hideouts. **Two sites turned into four, then nine.** After two months of investigation, our

team discovered no fewer than *fourteen* places where victims were being kept.

Strike

It was finally time to take the syndicate down. Our team worked with the police to carefully plan the massive operation. To keep traffickers from escaping with their victims, we needed to strike all nine locations at the same time so that the criminals wouldn't get a chance to warn each other.



Officers and agents divided into separate teams to go to each location

When the time came, the police struck all at once, storming each location simultaneously. Officers moved so fast that the traffickers had no time to resist or flee. **Not a single criminal escaped.**

The instant that officers secured each location, our team, along with government caseworkers, swarmed in on their heels to tend to the victims. While many of the survivors were relieved that they were finally being freed, others were barely aware of what was happening because the constant drugging had left them in terrible pain. “It was very sad to see... a horrible situation,” said Jacob. Though the nightmare is over, the journey to recovery will be long for these women. But thanks to the outstanding cooperation of our team and local law enforcement, *it has begun*.

When everything was said and done, the three primary leaders of the international sex trafficking ring were arrested. As happy as we are that those criminals can no longer lure and exploit victims, we’re most excited for the survivors. In all, **45 Colombian young women were rescued during the operation.**



Dominican National Police officers usher a survivor to safety

“Destiny Rescue is different...”

It’s that desire for rescue—that drive to put the survivor first—that has led to such a fruitful partnership with authorities in the region.

While there are many admirable NGOs in the Dominican Republic, Destiny Rescue is a primary touchpoint for Dominican law enforcement in assistance on such cases.

A big part of that has to do with our track record with them, but the only reason we could build that track record is by proving, time and again, that we’re not in it for fame.

“Destiny Rescue is different from other organizations,” Jacob said. “We just do it because we want to help trafficking victims. And that’s one of the things that the authorities really appreciate about Destiny Rescue.”