

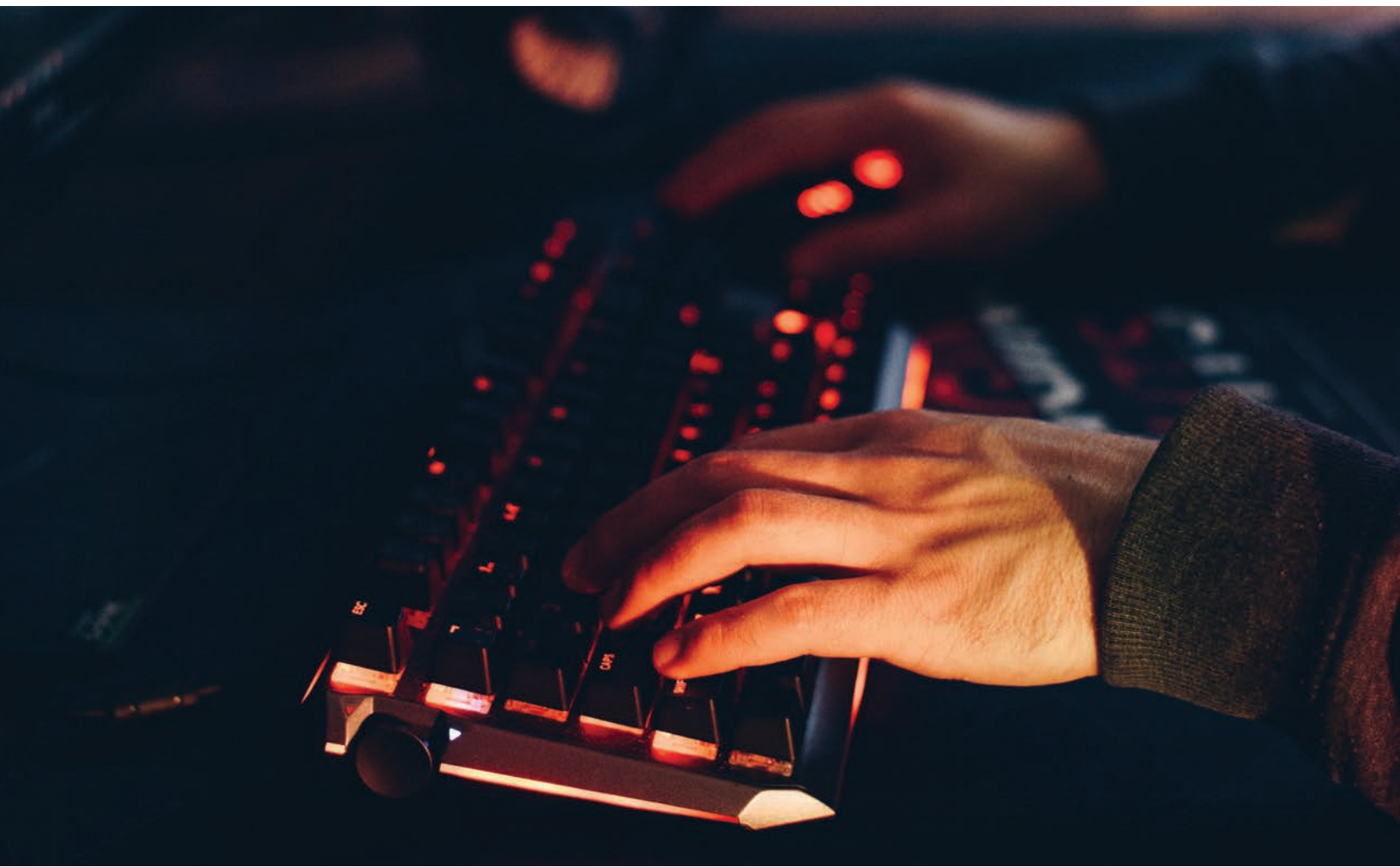
William J.
Perry Center



for Hemispheric Defense Studies

2024 Edition | No. 1 (January)

EMERGING VOICES



**Cybersex Trafficking in South America:
The Civil-Military Dimensions of Confronting
Human Trafficking in the Digital Domain**

By Zoe Nelson



About the Author

Zoe Nelson

Zoe Nelson is an Academic Assistant at the College of International Security Affairs at National Defense University, in Washington, D.C. She has an M.A. in Latin American and Hemispheric Studies from The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs where she concentrated on international affairs and migration. During her graduate studies, she completed fieldwork in Bogotá, Colombia on cybersex trafficking of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. She was previously an Honors Student at the University of Montana and received a B.A. in Political Science and a Minor in Latin American Studies. Zoe Nelson completed this research project during her time as a Research Intern at the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies.

Emerging Voices, the newest publication platform of the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, is a space for young professionals working in security and defense to profile their interests, concerns, and proposals for a more prosperous and secure Western Hemisphere. The editorial team of the Perry Center does minimum content editing to preserve the voice of the author.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense, or the U. S. Government.

Cybersex Trafficking in South America: The Civil-Military Dimensions of Confronting Human Trafficking in the Digital Domain

By Zoe Nelson



**WILLIAM J. PERRY CENTER
FOR HEMISPHERIC DEFENSE STUDIES**

**EMERGING VOICES
JANUARY 2024, No. 1**

Cybersex Trafficking in South America: The Civil-Military Dimensions of Confronting Human Trafficking in the Digital Domain

By Zoe Nelson

Introduction

In Bogotá, Colombia, María Luisa decided to become a webcam model – a sex worker who operates on webcam sites like Chaturbate and My Free Cams – after hearing about the economic freedom webcamming could give her. Her plan was to perform for a couple of months while she collected money, and then leave the job. However, she was unable to do so, as the owners of the establishment blackmailed her by threatening to send the sexual content she created to her family and acquaintances once she chose to leave. Thus, she was forced to continue producing sexually explicit content even though her compensation was not as promised, her working hours were not respected, she was forced to perform sexual activities without any protection, and she was mistreated both physically and emotionally.¹ María Luisa’s story, unfortunately, is not unique.

In the past decade, South American women and girls have increasingly become victims of human trafficking via cybersex venues like webcam sites. It is impossible to know the exact number of victims, but reporting coming mostly out of Colombia alerts us to the fact that abuse via the webcam industry is common. While militaries in South America are often called upon to address drug trafficking, this has seldom been the case with human trafficking.

The question then becomes: should South American militaries be responding to cybersex trafficking? Despite the myriad challenges associated with confronting cybersex trafficking in South America, the militaries of the region are not the best choice for the task and could cause more harm than good. That said, militaries could have a role to play in supporting law enforcement.

This paper explores what human trafficking, sex trafficking, and cybersex trafficking are and their distinctions; how cybersex came about and has proliferated; discusses possible responses to cybersex trafficking; and contemporary challenges.

Human Trafficking and Cybersex Trafficking: What Is It?

In 2000, delegates to the United Nations developed a comprehensive and widely agreed upon definition of human trafficking under the supplementary Palermo Protocol of the United Nations Convention Against Organized Crime. The Palermo Protocol defines human trafficking as: The

¹ Eso es Cuento, Ser modelo webcam, una fachada más de la trata de personas, n.d: <https://www.esoescuento.com/ser-modelo-webcam-y-trata-de-personas>.

recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation or prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.²

In addition to the Palermo Protocol, various international and regional conventions define slavery and call for states to combat trafficking and protect their citizens from trafficking (See Table 1). At the regional and global scale, human trafficking is seen as an unacceptable form of modern-day slavery that requires diligence and calculated efforts to combat.

Table 1: Relevant International Law for South American Countries Regarding Human Trafficking	
2000	The Palermo Protocol, a supplement to the United Nations (UN) Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime
2000	UN Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography
1999	International Labour Organization (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (Convention No. 182)
1995	Organization of American States (OAS) Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women “Convention of Belém do Pará”
1994	OAS Inter-American Convention on International Traffic in Minors*
1989	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
1979	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
1957	ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (Convention No. 105)
1949	UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others**
1930	ILO Forced Labor Convention (Convention No. 29)
1926	League of Nations Slavery Convention***
*Venezuela is a signatory but has not ratified the Convention.	
**Colombia, Chile, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, and Uruguay are not party to the Convention.	
***Colombia and Uruguay have not ratified the Convention	

² Siddharth Kara, *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery*, Columbia University Press, 2017: 4.

When delegates to the United Nations developed a definition of human trafficking in 2000, they may not have imagined the idea of humans being trafficked over the web, but their definition covers such exploitation. Since the beginning of the Internet age, perpetrators of sexual exploitation have leveraged the anonymity and modest costs of the web to commit exploitative crimes, including human trafficking.³

In fact, technology is misused by human traffickers at every stage of the crime from recruitment to exploitation, and as a form of blackmail and control. Technology has been used to easily engage with possible victims and clients, expand markets for consumption, advertise children as adults, and live-stream consensual and non-consensual sex acts to clients through the webcam industry.⁴

Cybersex trafficking is human trafficking with the purpose of sexual exploitation online, including but not limited to, producing sexually explicit material online like pornography, live streaming sexual activities, and Child Sexual Abuse Materials.⁵ Cybersex is a subset of cybercrime which is transnational, evolving, and “take[s] place in the borderless realm of cyberspace”.⁶ Cybercrime can be cyber-dependent or cyber-enabled. Cyber-dependent crimes are ones that target information and telecommunication technologies; cyber-enabled crimes utilize cyberspace to commit an illicit act.⁷ Cybersex trafficking is a cyber-enabled crime in which traffickers use the web and other technology to exploit women and girls primarily, but also men, boys, and transgender and non-binary people.

While victims of cybersex trafficking do not come in physical contact with the individuals who consume sexually explicit material online, also called clients, the exploitation said victims suffer is very real. In clandestine webcam houses called webcam garages in South America, victims experience different forms of violence from both consumers and traffickers. Webcam garages are usually houses, but sometimes literal garages, where South American women and girls primarily are trafficked on webcam platforms with no guarantees of pay, good treatment, or protection.⁸ Webcam garages are typically unhygienic; many models are often forced to perform in a common space and normally only one bathroom is available for sometimes more than a dozen models.⁹

Because trafficked models do not have legal protections and operate invisibly, clients can request and pay for extremely graphic and violent sexual acts behind the safety and anonymity of their screen to be performed by victims of cybersex trafficking. Examples include victims being forced to burn

³ Ophélie Stockhem, *Improving the International Regulation of Cybersex Trafficking of Women and Children Through the Use of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence*, EMA Awarded Theses 2019/2020, Bilbao: Global Campus Europe, 2020: 25.

⁴ Inter agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons, *Human Trafficking and Technology: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities*, Inter agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons, 2019: 1 2.

⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons: 2022*, United Nations, 2022: 70.

⁶ UNODC Module 14: *Links between Cybercrime, Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants*, May, 2019 : [https:// www.unodc.org/e4j/en/tip and som/module 14/index.html](https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/tip_and_som/module_14/index.html).

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Francisco Ulloa Osses, Fernando Garlín Politis, and Miguel Cares Rayo, *Sexo por Supervivencia en Población Migrante*. Bogotá: Aid for Aids, 2020: 42.

⁹ *Ibid.*: 32-33.

themselves, ingest feces or vomit, or insert dangerous objects into their bodies.¹⁰ Traffickers also violate their victims beyond exploiting them online. Traffickers rape victims, force them to engage in group sex and other sexual activities without their consent, manipulate and blackmail victims, and lie about the age of underage girls to market them online as adults.¹¹

The Advent of Cybersex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is a crime that has been committed primarily against women and children for much of human history. While sex trafficking has long occurred in brothels, apartments, hotels, massage parlors and on streets, the advent of cybersex trafficking has created a new frontier for sexual slavery.

While consuming sexually illicit materials via the web has been an appeal of the Internet since its inception, increasingly consumers and traffickers are moving towards “more interactive use” which has “opened new paths for sexual exploitation and gratification”.¹²



Photo concept: A partner nation Coast Guard member handcuffs a suspect during a mock boarding June 10, 2016, in St. George’s, Grenada, during Tradewinds. 2016.

Credit: Coast Guard News. 2016. Operations Tradewinds 2016. Flickr, St. George’s Grenada.

Pimps and traffickers are utilizing new technologies to reach a wider market of consumers, protect their anonymity through encrypted forms of payment like Bitcoin, to provide access to illegal acts and subjects.¹³ Fundamentally, cybersex trafficking, especially through the webcam industry, has created a new means of exploiting sex slaves and is “allowing traffickers to exploit areas of socioeconomic hardship with insufficient legal protection,” at lower risk and with higher profit margins.¹⁴

¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 51-52.

¹¹ Francisco Ulloa Osses, et. al, *Sexo por Supervivencia en Población Migrante*. Bogotá: Aid for Aids, 2020: 51 52.

¹² Thula Koops, Arne Dekker, and Peer Briken, “Online sexual activity involving webcams An overview of existing literature and implications for sexual boundary violations of children and adolescents.” *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd) 36 (2), 2018: 182.

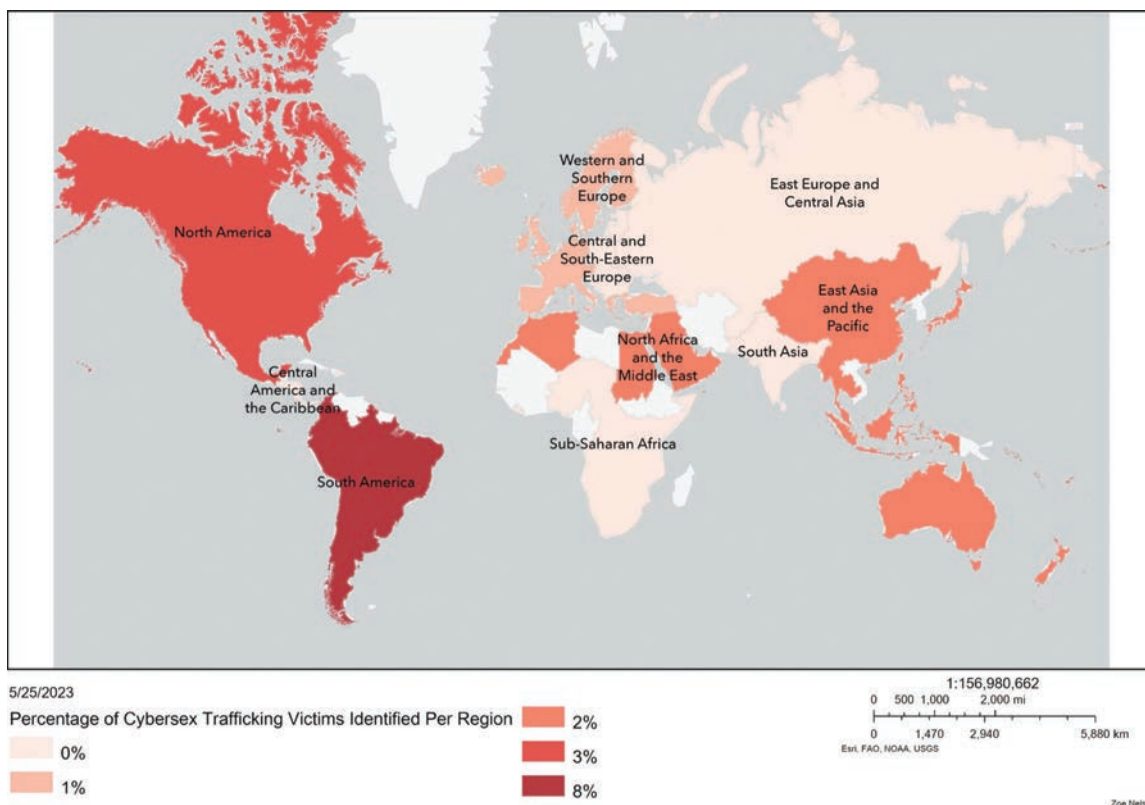
¹³ *Ibid.*: 188.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*: 188, 192.

In response to the increasing use of technology for sex trafficking, international observers and organizations have begun to recognize cybersex trafficking as an official means of sex trafficking. According to the 2022 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, two percent of identified victims between 2012-2020/1 of sex trafficking globally were trafficked in “cybersex” realms.¹⁵

South American officials identified the highest percentage of cybersex trafficking victims globally; eight percent of identified victims of sex trafficking in South America were cybersex trafficking victims.¹⁶ The next highest rate of victims identified to have suffered from cybersex trafficking were identified in North America at a rate of three percent (See Figure 1).¹⁷ However, “hidden forms of trafficking for sexual exploitation are less easily detected by national authorities, and, thus, less likely to show up in statistics.”¹⁸ Figure 1: Percentage of Victims Identified as Cybersex Trafficking Victims

Figure 1: Percentage of Victims Identified as Cybersex Trafficking Victims by Region Between 2009 2020/1¹⁹⁻²⁰



¹⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons: 2022*, 2022: 34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 112.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 99.

¹⁸ 112.: 112.

¹⁹ *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons: 2022*, 2022: 12 13, 80, 90, 99, 112, 122, 138, 148, 158.

²⁰ Notes on the map: data on victims of cybersex trafficking was not provided for South Asia so the author used “0%”; areas in white on the map where countries which did not provide data to the UNODC. Information on regional groupings can be found on pages 12 13 of the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons: 2022*.

Cybersex trafficking and other forms of technological sexual abuse and exploitation are “fundamentally an issue of gender.”²¹ Women are, have been, and continue to be the vast majority of victims detected in South America; between 2012 and 2021, women comprised 87% of identified victims of sex trafficking, while girls were 11% of identified victims.²²

In South America between 2009 and 2021, 94 percent of prosecuted traffickers operated in criminal organizations (See Table 2).²³ Only six percent of prosecuted traffickers in the region operated alone, highlighting the sophisticated and organized nature of human trafficking.

Type of Trafficking Structure	Definition	Percentage of Prosecuted Individuals
Business-Like Type of Organized Criminal Groups	Business-like type organized criminal groups involve “three or more traffickers systematically working together to traffic persons as a core component of their criminal activities”. ²⁴	79 ²⁵
Opportunistic Association of Traffickers	“Two traffickers operate together, or more than two traffickers [who] do not systematically work together beyond a single criminal act”. ²⁶	10 ²⁷
Individual Traffickers	Individual traffickers work alone in committing the crime. ²⁸	6 ²⁹
Governance Type of Organized Criminal Groups	Groups that “wield security governance in a community or territory by means of fear and violence and may be involved in multiple illicit markets”. ³⁰ An example would be the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), which operates in Colombia and Venezuela.	5 ³¹

²¹ Nicola Henry and Anastasia Powell. “Sexual Violence in the Digital Age: The Scope and Limits of Criminal Law.” *Social Legal Studies* (SAGE) 25 (4), 2016: 399.

²² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons: 2022*, 2022: 111.

²³ *Ibid.*: 115.

²⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons: 2022*, 2022: 48

²⁵ *Ibid.*: 115.

²⁶ *Ibid.*: 48.

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 115.

²⁸ *Ibid.*: 48.

²⁹ *Ibid.*: 115.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 48.

³¹ *Ibid.*: 115.

The COVID-19 pandemic also accelerated the prevalence of cybersex trafficking as traffickers adapted to lock downs and took advantage of individuals spending more time online. During the pandemic, traffickers used technology, adapted their strategies, and capitalized on the increased socioeconomic vulnerability of women and children to profit from cybersex trafficking.³² In particular, “child rights groups, law enforcement officials and international organizations report[ed]... greater demand for online sexual abuse material,” during COVID-19.³³

Responses to Cybersex Trafficking

In 2004, the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States Department of Defense (DoD) declared cyberspace a “domain” of conflict, co-equal with the traditional domains of air, land, sea, as well as space. In 2016, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) followed suit with the same determination. DoD defines cyberspace as “a global domain within the information environment consisting of the interdependent network of information technology infrastructures and resident data, including the Internet, telecommunications networks, computer systems, and embedded processors and controllers.”³⁴

In the United States, “there are four sets of cyberspace activities that pertain to the military: intelligence, information, crime, and military operations.” In practice, the military “respond[s] to a limited subset of crime,” but focuses primarily on “the military operations portion”.³⁵

U.S. law enforcement agencies take the lead on cybercrime, especially cyber-enabled crimes.³⁶ The police are vital in fighting human trafficking and sexual exploitation at-large. Police forces are responsible for identifying victims, arresting and detaining traffickers, and dismantling trafficking networks.³⁷ Prosecutors work in tandem with police forces from identifying traffickers to convicting them.

In South America, however, states are largely “unable to rely on their police forces to provide citizens with the protection they demand” due to inadequate training, and corruption, to being outgunned and outnumbered by myriad criminal organizations.³⁸ As such, “since the turn of the century, the armed forces have been increasingly asked to assist in the fight against crime.”³⁹ Escalating crime and high levels of violence “are two of the most compelling and seemingly intractable problems confronting

³² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons: 2022*, 2022: 70.

³³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Impact of COVID 19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons*: n.d. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/Advocacy Section/ HTMSS_Thematic_Brief_on_COVID 19.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/Advocacy%20Section/HTMSS_Thematic_Brief_on_COVID%2019.pdf): 2.

³⁴ Glenn Alexander Crowther, “The Cyber Domain”, *Cyber Defense Review*, 2017: 63.

³⁵ *Ibid.*: 66.

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 68.

³⁷ Ophélie Stockhem, *Improving the International Regulation of Cybersex Trafficking of Women and Children Through the Use of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence*, 2020: 12.

³⁸ David Pion Berlin and Miguel Carreras, “Armed Forces, Police and Crime fighting in Latin America”, *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 9 (3), 2017: 7.

³⁹ *Ibid.*: 5.

Latin America today.”⁴⁰

The deployment of armed forces to confront crime and its debilitating effects is well-supported by much of the public. In fact, it is usually voters who pressure their political leaders into deploying the armed forces onto streets and into cities when police have failed to confront the challenge of sophisticated criminal organizations.⁴¹ In addition, the public sees the armed forces as “well trained and respectful of human rights” and “appears to trust the professionalism of the armed forces”.⁴²

In South America, police and military missions have become “intertwined as police become militarized and the military take on policing functions”.⁴³

The presence of the military alone in responding to crises is not problematic, however, their relative subordination to weak civil institutions creates weak systems of oversight. So, as one scholar describes it, “when significant elements of the armed forces are placed in those non-military roles to perform an essential police function – for which they are not trained – human rights abuses will become more likely and levels of corruption will increase”.⁴⁴

Then what role should the armed forces play in responding to cybersex trafficking? Militaries should “at least pay attention to cybercrime”.⁴⁵ However, “most cyber activity should not involve the military at all,” due to the size of “cyberspace” and the preeminence of the private sector in this dimension.⁴⁶

The military could still work with police forces to address cybercrime. For instance, in the United States, the Defense Cyber Crime Center works with law enforcement to provide digital forensics, lab services, cyber technical training, and cyber analytics.⁴⁷

In this example, the military provides support to local law enforcement without being directly involved in leading operations. The military can also support police forces through intelligence sharing related to cybersex trafficking operations and specific criminals. Fundamentally, the military should act as a resource and source of assistance for local law enforcement but should not lead anti-cybersex trafficking operations.

The aim of military involvement should be to partner with local actors including police forces, prosecutors, and other relevant actors to build capacity to prevent the crime in the long-term.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 6.

⁴¹ David Pion Berlin and Miguel Carreras, “Armed Forces, Police and Crime fighting in Latin America”, 2017: 8.

⁴² *Ibid.*: 16.

⁴³ David R. Mares, “Appraisal and Challenges” in *Debating Civil Military Relations in Latin America* by David R. Mares and Rafael Martinez, 205-220, Liverpool University Press, 2022: 216.

⁴⁴ Peter Appleby, quoting Craig Deare in “Mexico Reliant on Army to Fight Crime Despite Human Rights Abuses”, *InSight Crime*, October 6, 2020: <https://insightcrime.org/news/amlo-armed-forces-human-rights-abuses-mexico/>.

⁴⁵ Glenn Alexander Crowther, “The Cyber Domain”, 2017: 68.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 75.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 69.



Photo concept: Police and military personnel, such as those from Colombia shown in the photo, need to work together to combat cybersex trafficking.

Credit: Flickr, Cúcuta.

Challenges of Combatting Cybersex Trafficking

In an Interpol study conducted in 2022, the majority of police responders globally identified that “financial and cybercrimes are the world’s leading crime threats and also those projected to increase most in the future.”⁴⁸ According to Interpol, “technology is allowing offenders to develop networks with like-minded people that are more complex and on a larger scale than ever before.”⁴⁹ As such, confronting cybersex trafficking comes with a host of challenges for the criminal justice sector.

The identification of both cybercriminals and victims of cybersex trafficking is a primary challenge for law enforcement officers. As previously mentioned, traffickers hide their identity and actions behind the relative anonymity of the Internet.⁵⁰ Individuals and victims of trafficking may use nicknames or online personas to mask their identity.⁵¹ Traffickers also utilize VPNs, or virtually private networks, which encrypts online activity to hide one’s identity. These tactics make it difficult for law enforcement officials to identify and track criminals.

Beyond the use of VPNs, “cyberspace is so large, and so much cyber activity occurs in the private sector.”⁵² There is a constantly growing volume of online interactions on the world wide web and the dark web; pinpointing the one in a million abusive interactions is daunting.⁵³ Operating in

⁴⁸ INTERPOL, Financial and cybercrimes top global police concerns, says new INTERPOL report, October 19, 2022: <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2022/Financial-and-cybercrimes-top-global-police-concerns-says-new-INTERPOL-report>.

⁴⁹ Ophélie Stockhem, Improving the International Regulation of Cybersex Trafficking of Women and Children Through the Use of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, 2020: 24.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 24.

⁵¹ Paolo Campana, Online and technology facilitated trafficking in human beings, Council of Europe, 2022: 10.

⁵² Glenn Alexander Crowther, “The Cyber Domain”, 2017: 75.

⁵³ Campana, Online and technology facilitated trafficking in human beings, 2022: 10.

the cyber domain is a complicated task because of its size, yes, but also because it is “difficult to keep up with developments in technology. As new services, software applications and websites become available, perpetrators will adapt and use those tools to facilitate their offending and abuse whether against children or adults.”⁵⁴

Finding cybercriminals and rescuing or supporting victims of cybersex trafficking is also a challenge because cybercrime is not generally a focus of law enforcement agencies.⁵⁵ Despite most police responders globally believing that cybercrimes are one of the world’s leading crimes, specialized cybercrime units often do not exist. Where they do exist, investigators lack relevant skills related to human trafficking investigations and knowledge of computer systems.⁵⁶

Even with all the right tools and training, data collection is resource intensive.⁵⁷ Forensic analysis often requires a warrant or sophisticated surveillance operations.⁵⁸ Sifting through the acquired data can take months. Police forces have also found that Internet and telecommunications service providers can be uncooperative or subject officers to critical time barriers.⁵⁹ Finally, because cross-jurisdictional barriers often exist, officers can be limited in accessing critical information unless they have connections with Interpol, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties.⁶⁰ Prosecutors play an integral role in bringing criminals to justice. Of course, if law enforcement is struggling to identify, arrest, and detain criminals, prosecutors will have trouble pushing cases forward. However, adequate trainings for prosecutors on cybercrime and human trafficking laws, collecting relevant evidence for cases, and conveying said evidence are all challenges to successful prosecution.⁶¹

Conclusions

Cybersex trafficking is a complicated, harrowing issue that has only recently received the attention of law enforcement officials, international organizations, and various governments. Based on UNODC data, cybersex trafficking is particularly problematic in South America and requires a thoughtful response to prevent more people from becoming victims.

⁵⁴ Anastasia Powell and Nicola Henry, “Policing technology facilitated sexual violence against adult victims: police and service sector perspectives”, *Policing and Society* (Routledge) 28 (3), 2018: 302.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 302.

⁵⁶ Campana, *Online and technology facilitated trafficking in human beings*, 2022: 10.

⁵⁷ Stockhem, *Improving the International Regulation of Cybersex Trafficking of Women and Children Through the Use of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence*, 2020: 42.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: 39 and Powell and Henry, “Policing technology facilitated sexual violence against adult victims: police and service sector perspectives”, 2018: 302.

⁵⁹ Powell and Henry, “Policing technology facilitated sexual violence against adult victims: police and service sector perspectives”, 2018: 302 and Campana, *Online and technology facilitated trafficking in human beings*, 2022: 10.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 301-2.

⁶¹ Campana, *Online and technology facilitated trafficking in human beings*, 2022: 12.

This paper examined the question of whether the militaries of South America should be responding to cybersex trafficking, since they are often deployed to counter other types of crime. In short, the answer is no. The rules of engagement for militaries differ significantly from law enforcement entities, which can have grave implications for human rights. Human rights abuses by the armed forces would be especially problematic when dealing with sex trafficking victims and survivors.

In addition, while militaries absolutely have a role to play in addressing cyberthreats in the cyber domain, confronting cybercrime should not be the primary focus due to the size of cyberspace and the role of law enforcement in responding to crime.

Although the military forces of South America should not be leading the charge to combat cybersex trafficking operations, much stands to be gained from the support militaries could lend to law enforcement entities related to forensic analysis and intelligence sharing. Military forces should also be trained on being able to identify victims of trafficking should they encounter them in other operations, at border crossings, and elsewhere.

Future work by academics, policymakers, educators, and civil society organizations should consider means of building the capacity of South American law enforcement and the justice sector to respond to cybersex trafficking in ways that are effective, victim-centered, and trauma sensitive. Additional research should consider how to address the roots of cybersex trafficking, as well as the cultural and socio-economic conditions which allow human trafficking at-large to flourish in South America.

Bibliography

- Appleby, Peter. 2022. "Mexico Reliant on Army to Fight Crime Despite Human Rights Abuses." InSight Crime. October 6. Accessed March 13, 2023. <https://insightcrime.org/news/amlo-armed-forces-human-rights-abuses-mexico/>.
- Campana, Paolo. 2022. Online and technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings. Council of Europe. Crowther, Glenn Alexander. 2017. "The Cyber Domain." *Cyber Defense Review* 63-78.
- Eso Es Cuento. n.d. Ser modelo webcam, una fachada más de la trata de personas. Accessed May 16, 2023. <https://www.esoescuento.com/ser-modelo-webcam-y-trata-de-personas>.
- Henry, Nicola, and Anastasia Powell. 2016. "Sexual Violence in the Digital Age: The Scope and Limits of Criminal Law." *Social & Legal Studies (SAGE)* 25 (4): 397-418.
- Inter-agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons. 2019. Human Trafficking and Technology: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities. Inter-agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons.
- INTERPOL. 2022. Financial and cybercrims top global police concerns, says new INTERPOL report. October 19. <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2022/Financial-and-cybercrimes-top-global-police-concerns-says-new-INTERPOL-report>.
- Kara, Siddharth. 2017. Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery. Columbia University.
- Koops, Thula, Arne Dekker, and Peer Briken. 2018. "Online sexual activity involving webcams - An overview of existing literature and implications for sexual boundary violations of children and adolescents." *Behavioral Sciences & the Law (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd)* 36 (2): 182-197.
- Mares, David R. 2022. "Appraisal and Challenges." In *Debating Civil-Military Relations in Latin America*, by David R. Mares and Rafael Martinez, 205-220. Liverpool University Press.
- Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. 2022. Understanding Human Trafficking. U.S. Department of State. 26 April. Accessed May 24, 2023. <https://www.state.gov/what-is-trafficking-in-persons/>.
- Pion-Berlin, David, and Miguel Carreras. 2017. "Armed Forces, Police and Crime-fighting in Latin America." *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 9 (3): 3-26.
- Powell, Anastasia, and Nicola Henry. 2018. "Policing technology-facilitated sexual violence against adult victims: police and service sector perspectives." *Policing and Society (Routledge)* 28 (3): 291-307.
- Stockhem, Ophélie. 2020. Improving the International Regulation of Cybersex Trafficking of Women and Children through the Use of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence. EMA Awarded Theses 2019/2020, Bilbao: Global Campus Europe.
- Ulloa Osses, Francisco, Fernando Garlin Politis, and Miguel Cares Rayo. 2022. Sexo por Supervivencia en Población Migrante. Bogotá: Aid for Aids.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2022. Global Report on Trafficking in Persons. United Nations.

- . 2022. “Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons.” UNODC. Accessed March 13, 2023. https://www.unodc.org/documents/Advocacy-Section/HTMSS_Thematic_Brief_on_COVID-19.pdf.
- . 2019. Module 14: Links between Cybercrime, Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants. May. <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/tip-and-som/module-14/index.html>.



WILLIAM J. PERRY CENTER FOR HEMISPHERIC DEFENSE STUDIES

Editor-in-chief: Dr. Patrick Paterson

Editor: Luz Noguez

Layout Design: Gabrielli Raya Lebrón

www.wjpcenter.org

Emerging Voices is an original publication of The William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies. The views presented are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Perry Center, the Department of Defense, the Department of State, nor the US government.