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Colombian police in Utah to combat human trafficking

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SALT LAKE CITY — Police from Colombia are in Utah working with law enforcement here to learn new ways to combat human trafficking.

Some of them were the same agents who worked with Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes when he went undercover last year in a human trafficking bust near Cartagena. Reyes posed as a security guard and translator for an American buyer interested in trafficking young girls into sexual slavery.

“We actually had no idea he was the attorney general,” Javier, an agent with Colombia’s CTI who declined to give his last name, told FOX 13 through a translator. “He just acted humble like everyone else.”

The Utah Attorney General’s Office and the non-profit group Operation Underground Railroad brought the agents here to Utah to learn best practices and new law enforcement and prosecutorial techniques to combat human trafficking. Reyes also honored them Thursday for their work on the human trafficking bust.

“For us, to be able to show them our state that we love, to show them the communities that indirectly they are helping to protect,” Reyes said.

The attorney general said cooperation with international authorities like Colombia’s CTI (that country’s equivalent of the FBI) can stop human trafficking before it arrives in America.

“We really believe we are making progress,” Javier said through the translator.



Police raided a massage parlor in Salt Lake City on Tuesday. The parlor is accused of being involved in prostitution and human trafficking.

The Utah Attorney General's Office has made several crackdowns on human trafficking in the state. In June, nearly a dozen massage parlors were raided on suspicion of human trafficking and prostitution. Last year, a man named Victor Rax was charged with numerous crimes, accused of forcing teenage boys into prostitution and drug dealing. Rax later killed himself in jail.

Reyes said his office would continue to push human trafficking busts, insisting it was a growing problem in Utah.

"Whether it's adult trafficking, child sex trafficking, labor trafficking, it's all human trafficking," he told FOX 13. "It's all modern-day slavery. It's all taking people against their will to do something unspeakable, to subject them to some horrors. It happens in Utah."