

# U.S. Marshals Service



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## U.S. Marshals Find 225 Missing Children in 16 Locations Across Nation During Operation We Will Find You

Investigators charge individuals for sex offender violations, other related charges

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## Office of Public Affairs

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**Washington, DC** – The United States Marshals Service (USMS), along with state and local agencies in 16 federal judicial districts and geographical locations across the U.S., led a 10-week national operation that resulted in the recovery or safe location of 225 endangered missing children, which includes runaways and those abducted by non-custodial persons.

*Operation We Will Find You* is a nationwide missing child operation focused on geographical areas with high clusters of critically missing children.

With technical assistance from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), *Operation We Will Find You* resulted in the recovery of 169 children and the safe location of 56 children. During the operation, the U.S. Marshals Service referred 28 cases to law enforcement agencies for further investigation of crimes such as drugs and weapons, sex trafficking, and sex offender violations. Law enforcement reported allegations of trafficking in over 40 cases the U.S. Marshals Service assisted with. Of the cases closed, 86% were endangered runaways, nearly 9% were family abductions, and 5% were considered otherwise missing. The youngest child recovered was six months old. Additionally, of the missing children recovered, 62 percent were recovered within seven days of the U.S. Marshals Service assisting with the case.

“The U.S. Marshals Service is fully committed to the important mission of protecting the American people, especially our most vulnerable population – our children,” said Ronald Davis, Director of the Marshals Service. “The results of this operation underscore that commitment, but also highlight the necessity of these critical efforts. Our continued success can only be achieved through our collaboration with state and local law enforcement agencies, and partnership with NCMEC. Together, the USMS and NCMEC have recovered over 3,100 missing children since the passage of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act in 2015.”

*Operation We Will Find You* is a great example of how the U.S. Marshals Service continues to prioritize child protection,” said NCMEC President & CEO Michelle DeLaune. “NCMEC is proud of our long-standing partnership with the USMS and commends them and the participating state and local agencies who helped recover the 225 endangered missing children.”

The operation was conducted from the following locations: eastern Virginia; Washington D.C.; Maryland; Massachusetts; South Carolina; New Orleans; San Antonio; Detroit; Yakima, Washington; Orlando, Florida; Los Angeles; northern Ohio; Guam; Puerto Rico; and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

During the operation, 42 children were found outside the city where they went missing, and 10 children were found outside of the United States in Mexico. In addition, the USMS arrested a Top 15 Most Wanted couple who fled to Mexico from Washington state with their five children, who they had taken into hiding.

*Operation We Will Find You* presented the U.S. Marshals Service with an opportunity to expand and highlight partnerships among law enforcement agencies and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to find critically missing children, and to bring more attention to the epidemic of missing children in America.

These missing children were considered some of the most challenging recovery cases in the area, based on indications of high-risk factors such as victimization of child sex trafficking, child exploitation, sexual abuse, physical abuse, and medical or mental health conditions. In addition, other children were located at the request of law enforcement to ensure they were safe and confirm the child’s location.

The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 enhanced the U.S. Marshals’ authority to assist law enforcement with recovering endangered missing children, regardless of whether a fugitive or sex offender was involved. The U.S. Marshals Service established a Missing Child Unit to oversee and manage the implementation of its enhanced authority under the act. Members of the U.S. Marshals Service - Sex Offender Investigations Branch, the Behavioral Analysis Unit, and the Missing Child Unit began training personnel in the participating locations months before the operation to ensure that case selection, vetting, and all pre-operational requirements were met.