



**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
COMMISSIONER JOSE “PEPE” DIAZ
DISTRICT 12**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MIA employees learn how to spot human trafficking victims with new training program

MIA is first U.S. airport to launch this training

MIAMI (March 1, 2012) – With Florida designated as a major hub for human trafficking by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Miami International Airport (MIA) and PortMiami are likely places victims will pass through. That's why MIA employees underwent a special training on Thursday, March 1, 2012 to learn how they can identify and respond to suspected victims and their captors.

Fifty MIA employees received training from Kristi House representatives at the Miami International Airport Hotel, where they learned key elements to look out for while on the job. Other personnel from PortMiami and Miami-Dade Police Department were also on hand for this training session. MIA is the first U.S. airport to implement this program.

Last fall, Commissioner Jose “Pepe” Diaz partnered with local non-profit Kristi House to advocate for Miami-Dade legislation to train personnel at both MIA and PortMiami to help children in transit who are suspected of being sexually exploited. According to Diaz’s legislation, about 293,000 youths in the United States are currently at risk of being victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Many of these children are runaways who leave abusive and neglectful homes and become involved in prostitution for financial support or by force. The FBI has identified the state of Florida as the third largest trafficking hub in the country. Diaz’s colleagues Vice Chairwoman Audrey M. Edmonson and Commissioner Esteban Bovo, Jr. also co-sponsored the item.

“There may be times when MIA employees see a minor who may be in distress, or encounter a situation that just doesn’t feel right involving a child and an adult traveling through the airport. This training will help employees identify warning signs and report them to the proper authorities,” said Commissioner Diaz. “I’m grateful to Trudy Novicki and Mary Faraldo of Kristi House, as well as our dedicated personnel at MIA and PortMiami, who are doing all they can to stop sex trafficking in Miami-Dade.”

“The Aviation Department is extremely proud to support Commissioner Diaz and Kristi House with this special training at MIA,” said Ken Pyatt, Miami-Dade Aviation Department Deputy Director. “As one of the top entry points in the country for human trafficking and the first U.S. airport to provide this training, we hope to spearhead a movement that spreads across the nation. In partnership with our airline partners, federal and local agencies, Miami-Dade Police and our tenants, we believe we can make a difference in stopping these heinous crimes.”

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"PortMiami proudly supports Commissioner Jose 'Pepe' Diaz's advocacy for better laws to protect human trafficking victims and on raising awareness against the sexual exploitation of children," said Port Director Bill Johnson. "All PortMiami employees will continue to undergo training focusing on the warning signs of human trafficking. In conjunction with Kristi House, the Port is establishing an alliance with the cruise lines, the International Longshoremen Associations, Miami-Dade Police Department and private security firms, as well as other local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to further expand awareness and prevention of human trafficking."

Novicki thanked Commissioner Diaz and County administration for sharing Kristi House's vision of protecting children from sex trafficking. "We are grateful for Dade County's decisive and expedited response to recognizing the need for a recognition and intervention program for child victims of commercial exploitation. Thanks to the Board of Commissioners under the leadership of Commissioner Pepe Diaz, and the airport and seaport authorities, children are safer today."

For more information, please contact Commissioner Diaz's office at 305-599-1200.



(L-R) Susan Decovitz, State Attorney's Office; Miami-Dade Commissioner Esteban Bovo, Jr.; Miami-Dade Commissioner Jose "Pepe" Diaz, Miami-Dade Aviation Department Deputy Director Ken Pyatt; and Trudy Novicki, Kristi House. (Photo: Armando Rodriguez/Miami-Dade County)



MIA employees undergo training on spotting human trafficking victims at the airport's hotel on Thursday, March 1, 2012. (Photo: Armando Rodriguez/Miami-Dade County)

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