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Attorney General Griffin Launches Operation Obscured Vision to Fight Human Trafficking Statewide

Griffin: ‘January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month, and the best way to prevent human trafficking and rescue its victims is to combat it on one of its key fronts: illicit massage parlors’

LITTLE ROCK – Attorney General Tim Griffin today issued the following statement announcing the execution of search warrants at 12 locations across the state as part of Operation Obscured Vision to combat human trafficking, resulting in aid provided to 16 victims, the arrest of four individuals, and the seizure of nearly \$70,000 and a luxury vehicle:

“January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month, and the best way to prevent human trafficking and rescue its victims is to combat it on one of its key fronts: illicit massage parlors.

“Operation Obscured Vision was coordinated by my office’s Special Investigations Division and executed by local law enforcement and victim advocates groups to expose the pervasive issue of illicit massage parlors in Arkansas, rescue the victims of human trafficking, and permanently end the presence of illicit massage parlors in our state.

“Many of the women working in these illicit massage parlors are coerced to do so. One victim we interviewed stated that she is forced to work seven days a week, 13 hours per day.

“I am proud to announce that local law enforcement, with coordination by my office, executed 12 search warrants at illicit massage parlors in Jonesboro, Russellville, Hot Springs, Rogers, Harrison, and a Little Rock hotel. I congratulate the local police officers, sheriff’s deputies, the Arkansas State Police, and Special Agents in my office for successfully executing this operation.

“I appreciate the efforts of victim’s advocates and the Arkansas Department of Health, who provided language interpreters, nursing services, and other support to help victims receive comprehensive and coordinated assistance to ensure their safety and support their journey toward independence and recovery. Seventeen victims ranging in age from 29-65 were identified in the operation, sixteen accepted services from medical staff and victim’s advocates.

“I am grateful to members of the Arkansas General Assembly and Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders for their support of adding a full-time human trafficking investigator to my office. That Special Agent worked tirelessly to coordinate this operation, and it wouldn’t have happened without the agent’s efforts.

“This operation is just a first step. The intelligence and evidence obtained through Operation Obscured Vision will be used in ongoing investigations and will aid in targeting similar massage parlors elsewhere in the state. The criminals who run these establishments and the men who patronize them are on notice. We are coming for you, and we will put an end to this horrific practice of exploiting women through human trafficking.”

Four women were arrested as part of Operation Obscured Vision.

- Haiyan Lu, 54, of Harrison, one count of Promoting Prostitution in the Second Degree
- Qing Chen, 53, of Jonesboro, one count of Promoting Prostitution in the Second Degree
- Hongliang Cai, 55, of Jonesboro, one count of Promoting Prostitution in the Second Degree
- Chunli Wang, 50, of Rogers, one count of Sexual Assault in the Second Degree

Law enforcement seized nearly \$70,000 during the operation. Additionally, ¥1,870 in Chinese currency was seized in Russellville. A Mercedes-Benz vehicle was seized in Rogers.

Participating law enforcement agencies in Operation Obscured Vision included:

- Arkansas Attorney General’s Office Special Investigations Division
- Arkansas State Police
- Arkansas State Fusion Center

- Jonesboro Police Department
- Harrison Police Department
- Rogers Police Department
- Benton County Sheriff's Office
- Russellville Police Department
- Little Rock Police Department
- Hot Springs Police Department
- Homeland Security Investigations

Prosecuting Attorneys participating in Operation Obscured Vision include:

- Sonia Hagood, Second Judicial District Prosecuting Attorney
- Jeff Phillips, Fifth Judicial District Prosecuting Attorney
- Will Jones, Sixth Judicial Prosecuting Attorney
- David Ethredge, Fourteenth Judicial District Prosecuting Attorney
- Michelle Lawrence, Eighteenth-East Judicial District Prosecuting Attorney
- Bryan Sexton, Nineteenth-West Judicial District Prosecuting Attorney

Advocate groups participating in Operation Obscured Vision included:

- Arkansas Human Trafficking Council
- Into the Light
- Freedom Finders
- Hope Found
- NWA Forensic Nursing Team/REACH
- NWA Sexual Assault Center
- We Are Free
- Regional Intervention of Sexual Exploitation (RISE)
- Children's Protection Center (CPC) Little Rock

About Attorney General Tim Griffin

Tim Griffin was sworn in as the 57th Attorney General of Arkansas on January 10, 2023, having previously served as the state's 20th Lieutenant Governor from 2015-2023. From 2011-2015, Griffin served as the 24th representative of Arkansas's Second Congressional District, where he served on the House Committee on Ways and Means, House Armed Services Committee, House

Committee on Foreign Affairs, House Committee on Ethics and House Committee on the Judiciary while also serving as a Deputy Whip for the Majority.

Griffin is currently an officer in the Arkansas Army National Guard and holds the rank of colonel. Griffin served as an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps for more than 28 years. In 2005, Griffin was mobilized to active duty as an Army prosecutor at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and served with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) in Mosul, Iraq.

His previous assignments include serving as the Commander of the 2d Legal Operations Detachment in New Orleans, Louisiana; the Commander of the 134th Legal Operations Detachment at Fort Liberty (née Bragg), North Carolina; and as a Senior Legislative Advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness at the Pentagon. Griffin earned a master's degree in strategic studies as a Distinguished Honor Graduate from the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

Griffin also served as U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, and Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Political Affairs for President George W. Bush; Special Assistant to Assistant Attorney General Michael Chertoff, Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice; Special Assistant U.S. Attorney, U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Arkansas; Senior Investigative Counsel, Government Reform and Oversight Committee, U.S. House of Representatives; and Associate Independent Counsel, Office of Independent Counsel David M. Barrett, In re: HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros.

Griffin is a graduate of Magnolia High School, Hendrix College in Conway, and Tulane Law School in New Orleans. He attended graduate school at Oxford University. He is admitted to practice law in Arkansas (active) and Louisiana (inactive). Griffin lives in Little Rock with his wife, Elizabeth, a Camden native, and their three children.

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