

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congressman Jeff Fortenberry, author of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2007, which was successfully incorporated into the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2008, today commented on the State Department's 2010 Trafficking-in Persons Report.

The 2010 State Department Trafficking-in Persons Report is the first to contain the Fortenberry child soldiers reporting requirement. The 2010 Trafficking-in Persons Report identified the following major international violators of the child soldiers prohibition: Burma, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Sudan, and Yemen.

“Now that we are aware of the major perpetrators of child conscription, we must reconcile the harsh dichotomy that presents an affront to our principles and moral sensibilities,” said Fortenberry. “On the one hand, we must work to help prevent spiraling instability and promote a semblance of just order in the midst of what are often highly volatile security situations. And in tandem, we are obligated by law to combat this most serious human rights violation, especially prevalent in the world's ungoverned spaces, where children can easily fall victim to coercion and abhorrent abuses. We must have an urgent and important dialogue about ending this pernicious human rights abuse.”

Fortenberry's Child Soldiers measure, as signed into law on December 23, 2008, prohibits funds from being obligated to the government of a country identified by the Department of State as having governmental armed forces or government supported armed groups, including paramilitaries, militias, or civil defense forces, that recruit or use child soldiers. Beginning on October 1, 2010, international military education and training assistance, foreign military financing, excess defense articles, section 1206 assistance, and the issuance of licenses for direct commercial sales of military equipment will be withheld.

Fortenberry is a member of the House Foreign Affairs and Oversight and Government Reform Committees.