



WASHINGTON, D.C.—Congressman Jeff Fortenberry, the author of the 2007 Child Soldiers Protection Act that was signed into law in 2008, today [introduced an amendment](#) to the Human Trafficking Victims Protection Act to strengthen U.S. child soldiers policy. The amendment, which was passed unanimously by the House Foreign Affairs Committee, requires the President to report to Congress 15 days before issuing another waiver what credible and verifiable steps are being undertaken in countries cited for child soldiers violations to implement a plan of action to end the recruitment of, and demobilize, child soldiers, and also prohibits the use of peacekeeping operations funds for those countries.

"In 2008, Congress did something very courageous: we passed a law saying it was the policy of our nation that children — all children, no matter where they are from -- belong on playgrounds, not battlegrounds," said Fortenberry. "This is the law of the land. We are obligated to stop underwriting this form of human trafficking, child conscription.

"The problem now is waivers continue to be given to countries found guilty of this human rights abuse. Waivers must be rare and temporary, and meaningfully intended to stop this pernicious practice. Strengthening our child soldiers policy is essential to combating this practice, and I am pleased that the House Foreign Affairs Committee took action today to help stop the United States' complicity in the militarization of children."

Yesterday, the Obama Administration announced it would again this year continue assistance to the following major international violators of the child soldiers prohibition: Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia (peacekeeping operations funds), Sudan (via the new country of South Sudan), and Yemen. The DRC will see its assistance reduced by an estimated \$300,000. Fortenberry is the Vice Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights.

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