

The Child Soldiers Prevention Act: Using our Best Tools to Protect Children

- An estimated 250,000 children are forced to fight in wars around the world. They are exploited as combatants, porters, human mine detectors, spies, and sex slaves.
- The lasting effects of war and abuse may also remain with them long after the shooting stops. Both girls and boys may be stigmatized and traumatized by their experience and left with neither family connections nor skills to allow them to transition successfully into productive adult lives. Children suffer higher mortality, disease, and injury rates in combat situations than adults.
- In 2013, the United States government found that the governments of South Sudan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, Sudan, and Somalia recruited or used children in their armed forces. The United States gives military assistance to six of these countries: South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, Myanmar, Central African Republic and Somalia.

The Child Soldier Prevention Act

- The Child Soldiers Prevention Act was signed into law in 2009 and was designed to encourage governments to disarm the children in their national armies as well as release them from military service and help them reintegrate back into their communities.
- Governments that are identified by the State Department as recruiting or using children in violation of international standards will lose key forms of military assistance that do not specifically address the issue of child soldiers and otherwise “professionalize” their armed forces until the children are demobilized.
- Countries that work to comply with the law will be eligible for assistance to address recruitment or use of children in their armed forces for up to two years before they begin to lose their funding.
- The types of U.S. military funding included are International Military Education and Training (IMET), Foreign Military Sales (FMS), Direct Commercial Sales (DCS), Excess Defense Articles (EDA) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF). The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2013 added Peacekeeping Operation funding to this list.

The Current Situation: Use of National Security Waivers

- The first Child Soldier Prevention Act list was published in the 2010 Trafficking in Persons report. Over the past 3 years, the Obama Administration has issued national security waivers for nearly all countries receiving U.S. military assistance.
- In 2013 the Obama Administration issued waivers for South Sudan, Yemen, Chad (no longer listed) and partially to the Democratic Republic of Congo. The government of Somalia receives assistance through funds designated for Peace keeping Operations (PKO) that were only made eligible for withholding in March 2013.

U.S. tax dollars should not be used to support the use of children as soldiers.