

President Trump Welcomes the Chicago Cubs to the White House

On Wednesday, President Donald J. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence welcomed the 2016 World Series Champions, the Chicago Cubs, to the White House. The team brought the Commissioner's Trophy and participated in a meet and greet with the President.

Before bringing the team in to the Oval Office, President Trump made some short remarks in the Roosevelt Room, where he congratulated them on their historic World Series victory last fall.



The team gifted President Trump with a customized championship "45" jersey, as well as a "45" scoreboard panel.



President Trump Hosts Tribal, State, and Local Energy Roundtable

On Wednesday, President Donald J. Trump hosted a tribal, State, and local energy roundtable at the White House. He was joined by Governors Paul LePage, Kim Reynolds, Pete Ricketts, and Bill Walker, along with State and tribal leaders from around our great country.

President Trump stated his Administration's intent to roll back harmful regulations that prevent State, local, and tribal communities from accessing vital energy resources. These regulations hinder economic growth that would create jobs and could be used to fund roads, schools, and infrastructure.

It is President Trump's hope that the roundtable will allow for more cooperation between local governments and the Trump Administration in order to unleash America's energy potential.

The President stated his intent to "usher in a golden age of American energy dominance."



[Press Releases: Secretary Tillerson Meeting with Kuwaiti Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Sabah](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
June 27, 2017

The following is attributable to Spokesperson Heather Nauert:

Today Secretary Tillerson met with Kuwaiti Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Sabah. The Secretary reaffirmed his strong support for Kuwait's efforts to mediate the dispute between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt. During the meeting the leaders reaffirmed the need for all parties to exercise restraint to allow for productive diplomatic discussions. The Secretary urged the parties to remain open to negotiation as the best way to resolve the dispute. The leaders agreed that stopping terrorism and confronting extremism should be our shared and primary focus.

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Press Releases: Remarks at the 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report Launch Ceremony

Remarks
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State
Susan Coppedge

Ambassador-at-Large, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

Advisor to the President Ivanka Trump
Ben Franklin Room
Washington, DC
June 27, 2017

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Welcome to the Department of State. We have quite the full room. My name is Susan Coppedge and I am the Ambassador-at-Large for the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. Thank you all for joining us today for the release of the [17th Annual Trafficking in Persons Report](#). (Applause.) I was looking for a copy to hold up because I'm a prosecutor and I like my props. (Laughter.)

But a quick word about our program. First, our host, Secretary of State Tillerson, will share keynote remarks with us. Following additional remarks by Advisor to the President Ivanka Trump, we will honor our eight wonderful trafficking in person heroes and hear brief remarks from one of them. After the event concludes, I will invite you to pick up your own copy of the report. It is an honor to be here this morning with Secretary Tillerson and Ms. Trump, and I thank you both for elevating the issue of human trafficking and for your support of the Trafficking in Persons Office.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. (Applause.)

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, thank you so much, Susan, and welcome to all of you to the State Department for this important event, and particularly I'm

honored to welcome members of Congress, and in particular I want to highlight the leadership of Chairman Corker who's with us from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee this morning. Thank you. (Applause.) I think this really illustrates the dedication to combating human trafficking and the commitment of our country that we have this joint effort underway across the entire United States Government.

And I also want to thank Ambassador Coppedge for her 16-year career devoted to this issue. (Applause.) And I also know she doesn't do this alone, and we're grateful to her staff and also the many, many State Department colleagues at our embassies and our consulate offices who both help with the preparation of this report, but I think more importantly, they encourage governments to progress their efforts to combat human trafficking every day in our engagement with them.

I also want to welcome ambassadors and representatives from the foreign diplomatic corps. Our partnership with you, obviously, is essential to combating human trafficking as well.

And finally, I want to recognize the survivors of human trafficking as well as representatives of the many NGOs and international organizations who are with us today, and thank you for being here for this rollout of this report.

I think before I get to some of my prepared remarks, it's – since this was my first one of these to review and sign off on and make the report, I thought it useful to go back and read the original reason why we do this. This is the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, and that's really where this all began. And I think it is useful to remind us why we're here this morning, why we're gathered in this room, and what the United States Government and the people of the United States were really trying to express in this area.

And I think if you go back to the preamble to this act, I think it really sums it up well. It says, "The purpose of this act is to combat trafficking in persons, a contemporary manifestation of slavery, whose victims are predominantly women and children, to ensure just and effective punishment of traffickers, and to protect the victims." And then it – I want to read just one more line: "As the 21st century begins, the degrading institution of slavery continues throughout the world."

That is why we are here this morning. It then does – the act goes on to require that the State Department prepare this annual report to make an assessment of how governments around the world are taking action to address this. And I think it's really through actions what this act motivated and what the State Department is doing as it meets its obligation, is we're identifying first where the problems are: how do the problems manifest themselves – because they continue to evolve and take on new characteristics; how do we then work with governments to cause them to put in place laws that allow them to then pursue those who participate in these various forms of human trafficking; how do we encourage governments to enforce those laws and actually begin to hold people accountable; and lastly, how do we create the conditions where the victims or the potential victims of human trafficking

are able to come forward in a non-threatening way and help us understand better how this is occurring.

And it's really the results of what we do that matter. The report is an important tool to help us understand and help us help other governments understand, but the end of it – it's the individual, it's the victim, and our ability to prevent others from being victimized.

Human trafficking is as old as humankind. Regrettably, it's been with us for centuries and centuries. But in the expression of this act, as I read that one line to you, it is our hope that the 21st century will be the last century of human trafficking, and that's what we are all committed to. Regrettably – (applause).

Regrettably, our challenge is enormous. Today, globally, it's estimated that there are 20 million victims of human trafficking. So, clearly, we have a lot of work to do and governments around the world have a lot of work to do.

So let me now make a few comments on the report and why it's so important. Obviously, the consequences of our failure to act in this area has so many other negative impacts around the world: it breeds corruption; it undermines rule of law; it erodes the core values that underpin a civil society. Transnational criminal networks also – whether they be drug dealers, money launderers, or document forgers – are partly enabled by participating in human trafficking activities as well.

When state actors or nonstate actors use human trafficking, it can become a threat to our national security.

North Korea, for instance, depends on forced labor to generate illicit sources of revenue in industries including construction, mining, and food processing. An estimated fifty to eighty thousand North Korean citizens are working overseas as forced laborers, primarily in Russia and China, many of them working 20 hours a day. Their pay does not come to them directly. It goes to the Government of Korea, which confiscates most of that, obviously.

The North Korean regime receives hundreds of millions of dollars per year from the fruits of forced labor. Responsible nations simply cannot allow this to go on, and we continue to call on any nation that is hosting workers from North Korea in a forced labor arrangement to send those people home. Responsible nations also must take further action. China was downgraded to Tier Three status in this year's report in part because it has not taken serious steps to end its own complicity in trafficking – including forced laborers from North Korea that are located in China.

American consumers and businesses must also recognize they may have an unwitting connection to human trafficking. Supply chains creating many products that Americans enjoy may be utilizing forced labor. The State Department does engage with businesses to alert them to these situations so that they can take actions on their own to ensure that they are not in any way complicit.

Most tragically, human trafficking preys on the most vulnerable, young children, boys and girls, separating them from their families, often to be exploited, forced into prostitution or sex slavery.

The State Department's 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report exposes human trafficking networks and holds their operators and their accomplices accountable.

The focus of this year's report is governments' responsibilities under the Palermo Protocol to criminalize human trafficking in all its forms and to prosecute offenders. We urge the 17 countries that are not a party to the international Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons to reconsider their position and to join the other countries who have made that commitment.

The 2017 TIP Report also emphasizes governments must put forward tougher anti-corruption laws and enforce them, so that traffickers do not get a free pass for those who choose to turn a blind eye.

Importantly, nations must educate law enforcement partners on how to identify and respond to those who dishonorably wear the law enforcement uniform or the military uniform by allowing trafficking to flourish. The most devastating examples are police officers and those who we rely upon to protect us, that they become complicit through bribery, by actually working in brothels themselves, or obstructing investigations for their own profit. Complicity and corruption that allows human trafficking from law enforcement officials must end.

We know shutting down these networks is challenging. But these challenges cannot serve as an excuse for inaction.

The 2017 TIP Report also recognizes those governments making progress. We want to give them credit for what they are doing. Last year, governments reported more than 9,000 convictions of human-trafficking crimes worldwide, up from past years.

Just to mention a few highlights:

Last July, the president of Afghanistan ordered an investigation into institutionalized sexual abuse of children by police officers, including punishment for perpetrators. In January, a new law was enacted criminalizing bacha baazi, a practice that exploits boys for social and sexual entertainment. The government continues to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers – including complicit government officials.

In the Ukraine – a country that has been on the Watch List for years – the office of the prosecutor general issued directives to improve investigations of trafficking, and increased efforts to root out complicity, including convictions of police officers. A teacher at a government-run school, a government-run boarding school for orphans, has been arrested for trying to sell a child. And officials are now on notice that complicity in trafficking will be met with strict punishment.

In the Philippines, increased efforts to combat trafficking have led to the investigation of more than 500 trafficking cases and the arrest of 272 suspects – an 80 percent increase from 2015.

Given the scale of the problem, though, all of these countries, and many more, have much to do. But it is important to note their progress and encourage their continued commitment.

As with other forms of illicit crime, human trafficking is becoming more nuanced and more difficult to identify. Much of these activities are going underground and they're going online.

The State Department is committed to continuing to develop with other U.S. agencies, as well as our partners abroad, new approaches to follow these activities wherever they go and to train law enforcement to help them improve their technologies to investigate and prosecute these crimes.

To that end, I am pleased to highlight a State Department initiative announced earlier this year.

The Program to End Modern Slavery will increase funding for prosecution, protection, and prevention efforts to reduce the occurrence of modern slavery wherever it is most prevalent. The program is the result of the important support of Congress, especially from Chairman Corker, and other leaders committed to bringing more people out from under what is a crime against basic human rights.

The Program to End Modern Slavery will fund transformational programs but also set about to raise commitments of \$1.5 billion in support from other governments and private donors, while developing the capacity of foreign governments and civil society to work to end modern slavery in their own countries.

As we reflect on this year's reports and the state of human trafficking the world over, we recognize those dedicated individuals who have committed their lives – and in some cases put their lives at risk – in pursuit of ending modern slavery. For many victims, theirs is the first face of hope they see after weeks or even years of fear and pain.

The 2017 TIP Report Heroes will be recognized formally in just a few minutes, but I want to thank them and express my own admiration for their courage, leadership, sacrifice, and devotion to ending human trafficking. (Applause.)

As we honor these heroes, we remember that everyone – everyone – has a role to play. Governments, NGOs, the private sector, survivors, and, most of all, the American people all must continue to work together to make human trafficking end in the 21st century.

And now please join me in welcoming an advocate for ending human trafficking, and someone who is doing a great deal to raise the profile of this issue, Advisor to the President of the United States, Ms. Ivanka Trump. (Applause.)

MS TRUMP: Thank you, Secretary Tillerson, for the warm welcome and for

representing the United States with such incredible distinction. It is an honor to join you, Ambassador Coppedge, and the entire State Department team here today, who works tirelessly to remove the ugly stain on civilization that is human trafficking. We are grateful for your continued dedication. Also here with us is Senator Corker. Senator, I want to thank you for your unwavering commitment to this critical issue. (Applause.)

It is an honor to be here today at the release of this year's Trafficking in Persons Report and to recognize this year's heroes. Their remarkable work inspires action. Thank you for affording us the opportunity to learn from your impressive examples.

Human trafficking is a pervasive human rights issue affecting millions, no matter their gender, age, or nationality. It is often a profoundly secret crime. One of the greatest challenges is to merely identify those trapped in modern slavery. Even conservative estimates conclude that some 20 million people around the world, including right here in the United States, are trapped in human trafficking situations, terrible circumstances of exploitation, including so many young girls and boys who are victims of unthinkable tragedy of child sex trafficking.

The stories of those we honor today demonstrate why combating this crime here in the United States, as well as around the globe, is in both our moral and our strategic interest. As Secretary Tillerson noted earlier, ending human trafficking is a major foreign policy priority for the Trump administration. Over the past several months, the White House has hosted round tables and listening sessions with victims, with NGOs, members of Congress, and others to determine steps we can take to better execute a strategy to finally end human trafficking. The President signed an executive order designed to strengthen the enforcement of federal law with regards to transnational criminal organizations, including traffickers. Further, he has taken steps to ensure that the Department of Homeland Security personnel are properly trained to combat child trafficking at points of entry into the United States.

This year's report emphasizes the responsibility all governments have to prosecute human traffickers. It also provides an opportunity for countries to see how others are fighting human trafficking and to adopt the most effective strategies and tactics, while renewing their own resolve in this struggle.

On a personal level, as a mother, this is much more than a policy priority. It is a clarion call to action in defense of the vulnerable, the abused, and the exploited. Last month, while in Rome, I had an opportunity to talk firsthand with human trafficking survivors. They told me their harrowing stories, how they were trapped in this ugly, dark web, how they survived, how they escaped, and how they are very slowly reconstructing their lives.

Here in the United States, we have our own Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, comprised exclusively of survivors. We cannot meaningfully address this pervasive issue without the brave voice of survivors at the table. They can help us understand what they experienced and they will play a leading role in solving this pressing crisis.

These survivors are not only victims; they are heroes. So are the courageous crusaders who have committed themselves to fight human trafficking wherever it exists. As part of the 2017 TIP Report, the State Department recognizes individuals who have been tireless in their efforts to combat human trafficking. Today, we honor a police officer, whose efforts led to the identification of 350 children forced into labor; a union leader, who protects workers in the fishing industry; a judge, who played a critical role in drafting her country's first anti-trafficking legislation; a journalist, who shines a light on forced labor; a faith leader, who works to protect vulnerable migrants; a sociologist, whose groundbreaking research considers the structural challenges affecting vulnerable populations; an advocate, who founded an NGO to care for child sex trafficking victims; and a survivor, the first in her country to win civil damages in a sex trafficking case. Each of these heroes is a source of inspiration. They all have different backgrounds but are united in this shared cause. We celebrate and we stand with each of you. (Applause.)

So as we mark the release of this year's report, let us remember the victims saved from the unimaginable horrors of human trafficking. Let us recommit ourselves to finding those still in the shadows of exploitation. And let us celebrate the heroes who continue to shine a light on the darkness of human trafficking.

Now please join me in welcoming the great Ambassador Susan Coppedge, as she reads the citations. Thank you for your incredible work. (Applause.)

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Thank you, Mrs. Trump, for those heartfelt words. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the White House. I would like to ask each TIP Report hero to stand up when I call out his or her name and country and join us to receive their award.

First, from Argentina, Alika Kinan. (Applause.) In recognition of her extraordinary courage in pursuing justice against her traffickers, her selfless efforts to assist the government in prosecuting and preventing human trafficking cases by sharing her experiences and knowledge, and her tenacity in advocating for greater protections for vulnerable groups and victims of trafficking in Argentina. They wouldn't let me read, they were clapping too loud, so – (laughter) – thank you.

Next, from Brazil, Leonardo Sakamoto. (Applause.) In recognition of his unwavering resolve to find and expose instances of forced labor, his commitment to raising awareness among vulnerable communities and within the private sector, and his vital role in ensuring progress in government efforts to prevent human trafficking in Brazil. (Applause.)

And Sister Vanaja Jaspine from Cameroon. (Applause.) In recognition of her unrelenting efforts to combat modern slavery, her groundbreaking work in identifying a key migration trend to prevent trafficking of Cameroonians in the Middle East, and her dedication to ensuring survivors have legal support and access to comprehensive reintegration assistance. (Applause.)

And from Hungary, Viktoria Sebhelyi. (Applause.) In recognition of her

groundbreaking academic contributions to reveal the prevalence of child sex trafficking in Hungary, her ability to bring together government and civil society organizations to improve victim identification and services, and her dedication to increasing awareness and understanding of human trafficking. (Applause.)

From Morocco, Judge Amina Oufroukhi. (Applause.) In recognition of her leadership as a driving force behind Morocco's comprehensive new anti-trafficking law, her perseverance in developing a victim-centered implementation plan, and her steadfast commitment to training judicial and law enforcement officials likely to come into contact with victims of human trafficking. (Applause.)

And from Taiwan, Allison Lee. (Applause.) In recognition of her unwavering advocacy on behalf of foreign fishermen on Taiwan-flagged vessels, her central role in forming the first labor union composed of and led by foreign workers, and her courage in demanding stronger protections for vulnerable workers through sustained engagement with authorities and the public. (Applause.)

And from Thailand, Boom Mosby. (Applause.) In recognition of her steadfast commitment to combat child sex trafficking in Thailand, her dedication to enhancing comprehensive care for victims, and her persistent engagement with government officials, social workers, and service providers to further protect and reintegrate survivors of human trafficking back into their communities. (Applause.)

And from India, Mr. Mahesh Muralidhar Bhagwat. We are sorry that Mr. Bhagwat was unable to join us today, but would like to recognize him for his dynamic leadership in combatting modern slavery in India, his vital role in elevating human trafficking as a government priority, and his innovative approach to investigating cases and dismantling trafficking operations. (Applause.)

Now, I am pleased to introduce TIP Report hero, Boom Mosby, the founder and director of the HUG Project in Thailand. Ms. Mosby is a passionate advocate for child victims of sexual abuse in Thailand, and has been instrumental in the advancement of a victim-centered approach in Thai anti-trafficking efforts. (Applause.)

MS MOSBY: Thank you. Secretary Tillerson, it is a great honor to be standing here today on behalf of a 2017 TIP Hero and especially on behalf of human trafficking's – human – human trafficking victims around the world. (Applause.)

I would like to tell you about one of those victims: a girl I will call Jane. She was the first trafficking victim I worked with. Six years ago, Jane was exploited in sex trafficking when she was only 13 years old. Like millions of other men, women, and children around the world, she found herself trapped in the darkness of modern day slavery through manipulation and false promises. Jane's traffickers used the seduction of money to lure her into their control. In hindsight, Jane would say that she took a wrong turn and made a mistake, but the truth is she is a victim.

No matter how much recovery Jane experiences, the physical and emotional scars will mark her for a lifetime. That is why human trafficking, whether for labor or for sex, is not only a crime against an individual; it is a crime against human dignity. But thanks to the devoted people like the heroes in this room, freedom is possible. Jane will tell you that the key ingredients to her recovery have been patience and unconditional love. What she needs from us is to stand with her at her worst. Today, Jane is about to finish high school and is determined to continue her education in social work and make a difference in the lives of other victims like her.

Success story like Jane's could not happen without collaboration. One example of this is the Thailand Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. TICAC represents a new model of cooperation between law enforcement and NGOs. We are putting aside personal agendas and bringing together dedicated and passionate individuals to accomplish our common goals. Our focus is on a victim-centered approach: always asking what is in the best interest of the child. The victim is always our highest priority.

Today, we are receiving the title of hero, but in fact, we do not possess any supernatural powers. (Laughter.) We are here because of the hard work and team work of many heroes. In the end, when facing the evil of human trafficking, we are all confronted with a choice: Do nothing or do something.

When looking at this choice, I am reminded of our past king, the late His Majesty King Rama IX, who died less than a year ago. As Thailand's long-reigning monarch, he was often referred to as the "father of our nation." He truly looked at the Thai people as his children, having compassion for their suffering and working hard to improve their lives. Today, I call upon the government, leadership, and ordinary citizens of every country to follow the late Thai king's example and look after their people as their children.

Thank you. (Applause.)

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Thank you, Ms. Mosby. We are so grateful for the work that you do, and we're truly inspired by all of our heroes here today. I also want to thank our colleagues in the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs for sponsoring the heroes' visit to the United States. After they leave here today, the heroes will be traveling to Boston and Miami to meet with anti-trafficking organizations, exchange ideas, and share promising practices.

I have spent my career working on this issue. First, as a federal prosecutor, and now, leading the TIP office in the Department of State. In both roles, I have witnessed the aftermath of human cruelty and greed really at its very worst – individuals, both children and adults, forced into unimaginable suffering. And yet I always say to work in this field you have to have hope, and I have hope – hope that is inspired by the incredible people I have met along the way: survivors, NGO leaders, dedicated law enforcement and government officials, experts and everyday community members who refuse to let this issue be ignored. The fight against human trafficking is a struggle that unites us all, and with determination, optimism, and collaboration, we can end modern slavery.

In her remarks, Ms. Mosby noted that we are all confronted with a choice: Do nothing or do something. Everyone in this room who is working in this arena and those around the world who are fighting trafficking are doing something. But to the rest of the world, I echo Ms. Mosby's call to action. When it comes to human trafficking, everyone has a role to play and an obligation to act. We must choose to do something to end modern slavery.

Thank you all so much for coming today. (Applause.)

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[Press Releases: Briefing on the 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report](#)

Special Briefing
Susan Coppedge

Ambassador-at-Large, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

Press Briefing Room
Washington, DC
June 27, 2017

MS NAUERT: Hi, everyone. Welcome to the State Department. Do you see those two junior reporters in the back? Those are my kids. Hi, boys. Welcome to mommy's new job. (Laughter.) So that means you all have to try to be a little bit nice today, or at least keep it clean.

All right. Good afternoon, everybody. I know we've got a lot to get to today.

QUESTION: A blatant play for sympathy. (Laughter.)

MS NAUERT: No, I wish. This morning, Secretary Tillerson released the 17th installment of the Trafficking in Persons Report, also known as the TIP

Report. To go into greater detail about that report today, we have with us Susan Coppedge, who is the ambassador-at-large to monitor and combat trafficking in persons. She'll join us in just a second.

Ambassador Coppedge will deliver remarks and then take a few of your questions. If you'd like to ask a question, just raise your hand, let her know which outlet you're with since she isn't here for you every day, and she can take your questions. So if you do have any questions about the TIP Report, please do ask those questions of her now so that she can best address them. When she's finished, then I'll take over and answer your questions about other matters at that time.

So with that, I'll hand it over to Ambassador Coppedge. Thank you so much for joining us.

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Thank you.

MS NAUERT: Let me move this for you so you don't have to –

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Thank you. Good afternoon, although I've lost all track of time today. It's been quite busy. Thank you, Heather. Thank you very much.

This morning, Secretary Tillerson released the 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report, a reflection of global leadership on this key human rights issue and our principal diagnostic tool to assess government efforts across the three Ps of prosecution, protection, and prevention.

The TIP Report is also a symbol of our moral and legal obligation to combat human trafficking and is in keeping with our country's historical commitment to advancing human dignity and freedom around the world.

This year's TIP Report – I brought a copy; I'm sure you'll all want one – emphasizes that governments must do everything in their power to hold traffickers accountable, from passing and enforcing tough anti-trafficking laws to prosecuting complicit officials who betray the public trust and profit from the suffering of others.

As the Secretary said this morning, the complicity and corruption that facilitates human trafficking must end. Justice must be served both to deter potential traffickers but also to restore the dignity of survivors.

To accomplish this, governments needs to speed up the delivery of justice while respecting due process, impose adequate terms of imprisonment commensurate with the heinous nature of the crime, and prosecute all criminally culpable parties and intermediaries.

Trafficking in persons is a hidden crime rooted in deception. Victims are coerced or intimidated into silence, and they often fear that if they do come forward they will be punished. When governments enact and enforce strong, comprehensive anti-trafficking laws, they send an unmistakable message to criminals: We will not tolerate this. Traffickers, not their victims, should and will face punishment.

This morning, the Secretary highlighted some positive examples of government action to hold human traffickers accountable, and we commend these and other governments that take up difficult cases and prosecute them to the end. But with more than 20 million estimated trafficking victims globally, prosecutions are still inadequate given the scale of the problem, and we all have more work to do.

Here are a few quick statistics from this year's report. Of the 187 countries assessed under the minimum standards, 36 countries were placed on Tier One, 80 on Tier Two, 45 were placed on the Tier Two Watch List, and 23 countries were on Tier Three. In all, there were 21 downgrades, meaning a country moved down a level, and 27 upgrades.

But no matter the tier, every country, even those on Tier One, should do more to combat trafficking. Tier One countries only meet the minimum standards to address trafficking, which is why the TIP Report offers recommendations for Tier One countries as well as others.

A key concern for many countries is a failure to impose sentences for traffickers that are sufficient to deter the criminal activity or reflect the nature of the crime. We still see instances of government officials protecting brothels, taking bribes from traffickers, and obstructing investigations for profit, and while we still see governments criminalize and penalize victims for crimes their traffickers force them to commit.

This is why we continue to use the Trafficking in Persons Report as an instrument in diplomacy, a means to effect global change and motivate tangible progress around the world. We hope it will continue to prompt foreign governments to enact legislation, establish national action plans, and implement meaningful anti-trafficking policies and programs.

I am very proud of this report, and I am happy to take any questions you might have. Yes.

QUESTION: Hi, yes, I'm with Reuters. I wanted to ask about the Child Soldiers Prevention Act list. So Iraq and Burma were taken off the list this year, and Human Rights Watch put out a statement about an hour ago saying that as of – even as of last week there were children that were part of Burma's armed forces, and in Iraq children have died fighting the Islamic State along with Iraqi Government units, meaning that both of those governments are still complicit in the use of child soldiers. I'm just wondering, what is the reasoning for taking those countries off the list?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: So the State Department will continue to monitor and report on the recruitment and use of child soldiers and will continue to engage the governments of Iraq and Burma on this issue. And in the report narrative, for example, for Iraq, we recognize that children remain highly vulnerable to forcible recruitment and use by armed groups, including ISIS, the Popular Mobilization Forces or PMF, tribal forces, and the Kurdistan Workers' Party. We are also concerned as well in the trafficking report about what happens to those children when they are recovered and make sure that governments continue to provide services for those individuals when they are

released from military forces.

Similarly, with respect to Burma, we continue to remain concerned that that government's response to past instances of child soldiering – the government has punished some military officers who engaged in the unlawful recruitment of child soldiers, but these punishments were not sufficiently stringent. They were more administrative than they were criminal sanctions. And I was able to directly raise this point with the government officials while traveling to Burma in December.

The 2017 report urges the Burmese Government to cease official involvement in compelling civilians to perform any type of forced labor, to reform the military's self-reliance policy and others that drive the demand for forced labor, and to look at child soldier conscription, and then again, when children are removed from the military to work on reintegrating them into society. So the narratives for those countries accurately and factually report what happened in those countries during the reporting period which ended March 30th of 2017.

QUESTION: But do you see any improvement? I mean, is there – what's the justification for then removing – if there are all these continued concerns, what's the justification for removing them from that list?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: So we look at various factors under the minimum standards when determining a tier ranking for those countries, and that analysis is reflected in the report. So certainly for these countries, we talk about areas where improvements need to be made, but Burma has made significant strides in removing children from military service.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: Thanks. China obviously responded with some displeasure, calling it irresponsible. So what effect do you expect this to have on working with China on North Korea, and is it possible that it might actually have the opposite effect?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Well, we have to continue working with all governments that are ranked in the report, and sometimes there is initial displeasure with that ranking. However, the report is seen worldwide as a real factual and accurate analysis of what's going on in countries such as China, and there are recommendations for China as there are for other ranked countries – Tier Two and Tier Two Watch List as well. And so all countries have recommendations, including the United States. We certainly look at ourselves as well and talk about areas where progress can be made and hope to continue those good working relationships diplomatically.

QUESTION: So what expectation do you have that this will be a positive pleasure – pressure that will spur them to act in the way that the U.S. wants them to do towards North Korea?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: So the Trafficking Victim Protection Act sets out these minimum standards and the analysis that officials in the State Department are

to use, and this is done by people in the field at our embassies as well as here. So we don't consider whether it's going to be positive or negative. We want to be truthful and accurate, and we certainly hope to continue our diplomatic engagement.

Historically, we have heard that this report does make a difference. When I travel, I meet with senior government officials who want to do more to address this issue and want to do more to improve their ranking. And so I hope that internal pressure on a country as well as diplomatic pressure from other nations will continue to be an impetus for change.

QUESTION: Can I ask a question on (inaudible)?

QUESTION: What was it that – what was it that tipped the edge – tipped the edge for China? Because it's been on the Two Watch List for a while, and according to reports there was some pressure other years to put it down to three. Was it the North Korean forced labor? Because that's what Secretary Tillerson decided to emphasize in his remarks.

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Secretary Tillerson did highlight the concerns with forced labor with respect to North Korea, but there are other forced labor concerns in China as well. There have been NGO reports that indicate there is still government complicity with respect to drug rehabilitation facilities where individuals continue to be detained without judicial process. Human rights organizations and media continue to report that local officials in western China coerced Uighur men and women to participate in forced labor outside that province there. And then despite the local government issuing a decree in early 2017, that practice has not ceased. Last, international media and the ILO report that children in some work-study programs supported by local governments and schools are forced to work in factories. So forced labor in China is not one-dimensional.

QUESTION: One more on China. I'm Felicia Schwartz with *The Wall Street Journal*.

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Thank you.

QUESTION: So in terms of just to follow up on Barbara's question, in terms of one thing tipping the scale, I guess. You listed several things that are of concern, but did one of them tip the scale? And then in general, was downgrading China part of a broader strategy on China or is this just happening in the context of this relationship without a connection?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: So it's hard to say that any one thing for any one country will tip the scale, because there are so many minimum standards we look at. We look at whether the law is comprehensive. In China, for children under 18, it appears that Chinese law does not require – or does require force, fraud, and coercion, which is an international standard for those over 18. Children under 18 who are placed in sex trafficking should automatically be viewed as victims, because they are not consenting based on their age. So there's a concern about the law there.

There's a concern about victim services in China as well, that once individuals are identified they're not screened for trafficking indicators, they aren't provided the services they need, and they aren't assisted with reintegration into society. So there are many factors that go into any country's ultimate tier ranking.

QUESTION: Question on child brides?

QUESTION: And then anything about the broader relationship, about downgrading China this year to pressure them in any way?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: So the minimum standards that are in the law don't really allow for consideration of strategic relationships or other factors.

Yes.

QUESTION: Can I – question on child brides. My name's Said Arikat from *Al Quds* daily newspaper. About child brides, especially Syrian refugees on the side of the Jordan border in the Zaatari camp in particular and in Lebanon as well, where girls as young as 13 and 14 are married off to wealthy, middle-aged men from the Gulf region and so on. And it seems to be sanctioned by both the Jordanian Government or the Lebanese Government and the clerics. I wonder what you're doing about that.

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Certainly if there's –

QUESTION: And the UN.

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Certainly if there are instances of sex trafficking with respect to forced marriage, that is recounted in the report. Forced marriage is one of those truly horrible issues that may not, however, always be trafficking. It can be that you're forced into marriage without the continued exploitation via force, fraud, and coercion. But we do look at forced marriage as a component of sex trafficking in cases where it's indicated.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: Patty Culhane, *Al Jazeera English*. What will be the real-world impact of China being put in this tier? Will the – sanctions, cultural programs – how will we see an impact?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: So there are restrictions that can come with a Tier Three ranking. We have a 90-day process to put that into place and the White House makes the final determination on those restrictions, so we don't yet know.

QUESTION: Are you aware of any time that sanctions have been imposed, that a president since – has imposed sanctions on a country for being in Tier Three?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: I've been in the office for two years, and last year there were partial restrictions that were imposed is my understanding.

QUESTION: On which countries?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: I can't recall right now. We can get back to you on that.

QUESTION: I'm with *The Washington Post*. Some of the human rights groups have said that some of the current policies, such as putting an end to sanctuary cities, might make it more difficult for the U.S. to remain on Tier One next year. Is – I'm just pulling that one out, just to be straightforward about it. Is that a realistic possibility, that something like ending sanctuary cities could cause the U.S. ranking to take a hit?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: So one of the vulnerabilities that the report addresses worldwide is individuals who are in a country unlawfully and may not have access to documentation or lawful work. That then makes them more vulnerable to traffickers, who can then impose upon them work requirements that could lead to forced labor and labor trafficking. And so it certainly is a concern globally how to address and how to screen for indicators among those who might not be in a country lawfully to see if they are, in fact, victims of trafficking.

And here in the U.S., if that is found to be the case, that someone is here unlawfully but is a victim of trafficking, they are allowed to apply for a T visa, and that T visa allows them to stay and work with the prosecution in their case and to move forward. And one of the messages while I have been in this office is – has been that we really need to focus on not criminalizing victims who are committing crimes due to the situation of being trafficked – for example, the trafficker brings them across the border or the trafficker puts them into employment or the trafficker puts them into prostitution. These are crimes in this country, but the victim is not the one perpetrating the crime, it's the trafficker.

MS NAUERT: Last question.

QUESTION: This may be a question for DHS, but how – if you've been deported, how do you apply for a T visa?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: You can still apply for a T visa with the Department of Homeland Security. In fact, I had a victim in a trafficking case who was back in Central America, and we needed to bring her here to testify, and she received a T visa for that.

QUESTION: Who had been deported for being here illegally?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: She had been deported. Yes.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: And she has come back and testified?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: She did. She was able to obtain a T visa from abroad.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: So last year, China actually was given a waiver to stay on the Tier

Two Watch List. Can you speak a little bit to whether that was considered in this particular year or kind of generally speaking how the department considers whether or not to issue a waiver?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Sure. So for two years, a country can be on the Watch List without a waiver. And then for two years a waiver is required to remain on the Watch List. And to be eligible for that waiver, a country must submit a national action plan that if it were fully funded would lead toward significant efforts to eliminate trafficking. So that decision is made every year that a country needs that waiver.

So it didn't impact this year's decision. We analyzed the minimum standards and made a determination that China was not making significant efforts and therefore belonged on Tier Three.

QUESTION: Did they issue an action plan or send you an action plan, China specifically?

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: I don't recall.

MS NAUERT: Thanks, everybody.

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Thank you.

MS NAUERT: That's all the ambassador has time for.

QUESTION: Thank you.

AMBASSADOR COPPEDGE: Thank you all.

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