



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
15 October 2024

Original: English
English, French and Spanish only

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Report submitted by the United States of America under article 8 (1) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, due in 2022*, **

[Date received: 23 January 2022]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.
** The annexes to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



List of acronyms

CMP	Civilian Marksmanship Program
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSAA	Child Soldiers Accountability Act of 2008
CSPA	Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008
CTIP	Counter Trafficking in Persons
DHS	United States Department of Homeland Security
DoD	United States Department of Defense
DOJ	United States Department of Justice
DOS	United States Department of State
ED	United States Department of Education
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
JROTC	Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps
NGO	Nongovernmental Organizations
OPAC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
UNAMA	United National Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

I. Introduction

1. The United States of America welcomes this opportunity to submit its Fifth Periodic Report on measures giving effect to its obligations under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC). The report places particular emphasis on developments since submission of the Third and Fourth U.S. Report (CRC/C/OPAC/USA/3-4) in 2016 (hereinafter 2016 Report). The selection and order of the content in this report generally follow that of the Committee's June 2, 2017, Concluding Observations (Observations), CRC/C/OPAC/USA/CO/3-4.

2. This report draws on the expertise of the U.S. Departments of State (DOS), Defense (DoD), Education (ED), Justice (DOJ), and Homeland Security (DHS), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The United States intends to hold a civil society consultation with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) prior to its committee presentation.

II. Follow-up information of the concluding observations (CRC/C/OPAC/USA/CO/3-4)

General Observations

3. The United States welcomes the Committee's careful consideration of its report and intends actively to continue its implementation of its obligations under the OPAC. In the spirit of cooperation, the United States is providing as much information as possible in response to the Committee's questions and comments, even in the instances where the questions or information provided in response do not bear directly on obligations arising under the OPAC.

4. With regard to ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the United States supports the goals of the CRC and has signed the treaty but has not transmitted it to the U.S. Senate for its advice and consent, which is required for ratification of a treaty under our constitutional system. Consideration of that potential transmission remains ongoing.

General Measures of Implementation

5. Legislation. With regard to its minimum age of voluntary recruitment, as the United States indicated in its replies to the List of Issues of March 14, 2017, the United States is not required under the OPAC or under any other legal or policy instrument to raise the voluntary recruitment age to 18, and it does not intend to do so. In the United States, students graduating from high school who do not intend to continue their education normally enter the work force. One work force option is military service. While most graduates are 18 by the time of high school graduation, some – generally those with birthdays between June and September – are still 17 years old. The United States maintains the minimum voluntary recruitment age at 17 so that persons graduating from high school can enter military service shortly after graduation, rather than be unemployed for several months. Because it takes many months to complete the recruitment, enlistment, and training processes, recruits are normally 18 by the time they are ready to join their military units.

6. The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force have implemented various policies, procedures, and controls to ensure, consistent with OPAC Article 1, that any service members under the age of 18 do not take direct part in combat. For this purpose, DoD carefully tracks the assignments of service members under the age of 18. As noted in our 2016 Report, since 2010, we do not believe there have been any deployments of service members under the age of 18 into areas where hazardous duty pay and/or imminent danger pay are authorized, and even prior to 2010 service members under the age of 18 deployed into such areas did not take direct part in combat. Pay records data indicate that, since our 2016 Report, two Army service members may have been deployed a month prior to their respective 18th birthdays, but DoD

believes this data is the result of reporting errors and, at the time of submission of this report, was seeking confirmation. In addition, each of the Military Departments has established policies and procedures that limit the assignment of service members to units deployed overseas or scheduled to deploy operationally before the service member's 18th birthday. The Military Departments also have checks in their personnel systems to ensure that assignment managers adhere to the provisions of the service policies and programs. Safeguards include actions such as "flagging" the records of service members under the age of 18, adding duty limitation codes, and conducting multiple checks during the assignment or movement process. DoD Instruction 1332.45 (issued July 30, 2018, change 1, effective April 27, 2021) provides that service members who are not yet 18 years of age are temporarily non-deployable.

7. With regard to the Committee's recommendation regarding Presidential waivers for foreign governments listed in the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, pursuant to the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008 (CSPA), as amended (Tit. IV, Pl L. 110-457), the United States notes that Title II, Subtitle B of the Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2018, Pl. L. 115-425, titled the Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2018, strengthened a number of the provisions of the CSPA. As amended, the law now requires not only the listing of governments having governmental armed forces or government-supported armed groups that recruit or use child soldiers, but also the listing of governments having police or other security forces that recruit or use child soldiers. Moreover, the CSPA, as amended, only permits the President to waive the application of the restrictions under the CSPA if the President determines that such waiver is in the national interest of the United States and certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that the government of such country is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers. The President further is required to notify the appropriate congressional committees of the justification for granting such a waiver. Finally, the CSPA, as amended, also requires DOS to include in its annual TIP Report the CSPA list, a description and the amount of any assistance withheld pursuant to that listing, a list of any waivers or exceptions exercised, a justification for any such waivers or exceptions, and a description and the amount of any assistance provided pursuant to the issuance of such waivers. (The text of the Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2018 is provided in **Error! Reference source not found.**) We also note that DOS engages with civil society organizations as part of the CSPA waiver process and most recently organized a meeting with civil society on this topic in October 2021.

8. Reservations. The United States maintains its position regarding the understandings in its instrument of ratification, attached to the U.S. Initial Report, UN Doc. CRC/C/OPAC/USA/1, as **Error! Reference source not found.** (Observation 12), including its understandings with regard to "direct part in hostilities" and "minimum age of voluntary recruitment" as used in the OPAC, and continues to implement its obligations under the Protocol in good faith consistent with those understandings.

9. Independent Monitoring. As noted previously, monitoring is undertaken at all governmental levels in the United States. Although the United States does not have a national human rights institution *per se*, it has multiple complementary mechanisms and processes to reinforce our ability to ensure respect for human rights domestically through federal departments and agencies; numerous state, local, tribal, and territorial human rights agencies and institutions; and the independent judiciary at all levels. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, as of July 15, 2020, 38 states continued to have child advocate or child ombudsman offices, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/childrens-ombudsman-offices.aspx>. The United States has encouraged and will continue to encourage states to set up such offices.

10. Dissemination and Awareness Raising. The United States continues to disseminate the text of the OPAC and related material to all government levels and to the public. DOS also publishes widely-read reports addressing the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers, including the annual TIP Report, www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/, and the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, <https://www.state.gov/reports-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/>. As noted above, the 2018 Child Soldier Prevention Act added congressional reporting requirements

related to the use of Presidential waivers for governments included on the CSPA list. The United States will continue to promote wide dissemination of the OPAC and information on the issues it covers. However, states and local school districts, not the federal government, have authority for determining school curriculums.

11. The United States continues actively to train military and civilian personnel to support the effective implementation of the OPAC and to further the goals of the OPAC. All DoD military and civilian employees are required to participate in training to further general awareness of trafficking in persons, and specialized trainings on combating trafficking in persons for investigative professionals and for acquisition and contracting personnel also contain information on the CSPA. Overseas Combatant Commands also provide theater- and country-specific training, in addition to other training provided by DoD. DOS, DHS, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also provide training to federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local agencies, and more broadly to health care organizations, business leaders, academia, legal practitioners, and the public. DHS provides training on the OPAC to its asylum officers, as well as officers who interview refugees overseas applying for resettlement in the United States. Training on trafficking in persons is part of USAID's employee orientation, and online counter-trafficking in persons training, including information about child soldiers, is mandatory for all USAID staff. Training provided as part of U.S. international assistance and coordination is described in paragraphs 129–161 of the Second Periodic Report.

12. Data. As noted in our 2016 Report, in view of the shared responsibilities between federal and state governments, establishment of a comprehensive central data collection system to identify and register all children present within U.S. jurisdiction who may have been recruited or used in hostilities abroad would pose significant challenges. Updated data on voluntary recruits under the age of 18 into the U.S. military and on refugee and asylum applications of children from those countries identified in the annexes to the UN Secretary-General's 2021 Report on Children and Armed Conflict can be found in OPAC **Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.**, respectively.

13. Right to Life, Survival and Development. The United States recalls its previous responses to this issue, including that the Committee's observation under this heading does not relate to obligations undertaken by the United States under the OPAC or OPSC and that international humanitarian law is the *lex specialis* with respect to the conduct of hostilities and the protection of war victims. U.S. Armed Forces comply with the law of war, including requirements to take feasible precautions to reduce the risk of civilian casualties, including children, in the conduct of hostilities. Such U.S. policy and practice are described in, *inter alia*, Executive Order 13732 of July 1, 2016, United States Policy on Pre- and Post-Strike Measures to Address Civilian Casualties in U.S. Operations Involving the Use of Force.

14. Even when military force is used in accordance with the law of war with as much precision and care as possible, civilian casualties can nonetheless occur in armed conflict. Notwithstanding this tragic reality of armed conflict, the practice of the United States is to conduct assessments, investigations, or other reviews of instances in which civilians, including children, may have been killed or injured, including to understand how the incident occurred, and to improve practices so as to minimize the risk of civilians being killed or injured in the future. Investigations also can consider issues of individual accountability or lead to criminal investigations if there is a basis for such inquiry. Additionally, if it is determined that non-combatants were killed or injured in a U.S. strike, we may, where appropriate, offer condolence or ex gratia condolence payments to those injured and the families of those killed. For instance, in September 2021, the commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), Marine Corps Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr, announced that he had thoroughly reviewed the findings of an investigation into an August 29, 2021 Hellfire missile strike in Kabul, Afghanistan, which was launched in an effort to kill ISIS-K planners, and offered his sincere and profound condolences to the family and friends of at least 10 civilians—including up to seven children—who died in the tragic strike. DoD also announced that it was exploring the possibility of ex gratia payments, and that Secretary of Defense

Lloyd J. Austin III had asked Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall to task a military officer — three-stars or higher — to conduct a review of the CENTCOM investigation.

Prevention

15. Voluntary Recruitment. As noted in our 2016 Report, consistent with the OPAC Article 3(1) requirement that the minimum age for voluntary recruitment be above the age of 15, the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the U.S. Armed Forces is 17 years. The United States has reviewed its policies and has confirmed that adequate safeguards are in place to protect 17-year-olds interested in serving. For further discussion of safeguards, see the Second Periodic Report, CRC/C/OPAC/USA/2, 8 and 34-46.

16. Recruiting has been at the heart of U.S. military services since they became all volunteer in 1973, and the United States takes adhering to recruitment requirements seriously. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended, requires that local educational agencies that receive financial assistance from the federal government under the ESEA permit military recruiters to have access, upon request, to limited, well-defined information (names, addresses, and telephone listings) of all secondary school students, unless the parent submits a written request that such information not be released for such purposes without the parent's prior written consent. If such a request is received, the local educational agency may not release the student's name, address, or telephone listing to military recruiters without the prior written consent of the parent. Once the student has reached 18 years of age, the right to opt out of disclosing this personal information to a military recruiter transfers to the student. Similar provisions are in 10 U.S.C. § 503. Section 503(c)(3) also mandates access to an electronic mail address as one of the items that a local educational agency must make available to military recruiters upon their request. As a matter of DoD policy, military recruiters routinely request this information only for juniors and seniors in high school, i.e., those in their third and fourth years of a four-year high school program, who are typically 16 to 18 years old.

17. Further, local educational agencies that receive federal financial assistance under the ESEA must notify the parents of students they serve (or the students, if 18 years of age or older) of the opportunity to opt out of the disclosure of this information to military recruiters. Consistent with the ESEA, ED in consultation with DoD notified school leaders, school administrators, and other educators about these provisions in a "Dear Colleague" letter, https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/military-recruiter_.pdf.

18. A DoD Instruction on Military Services Recruiting Related Reports (issued March 26, 2013, change 1, effective March 31, 2017) establishes policy and procedures, and assigns responsibility for tracking and reporting of various recruiting related data, www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/130432p.pdf. This instruction includes requirements to track and report recruiter irregularities, including allegations of misconduct. Individual recruiters who violate professional standards or commit misconduct are held accountable as appropriate under the Uniform Code of Military Justice or administrative processes.

19. Recruiters are given goals or missions to help motivate their work and to ensure that a sufficient number of highly qualified recruits are brought into the U.S. Armed Forces, which as noted above are all volunteer. There are no plans to abolish this longstanding practice; nor does the OPAC require its abolition. DoD has established rules to ensure that young men and women fully understand the possible consequences of their decisions and have time to ensure that the decisions they make are the right ones for them. U.S. law, discussed above, requires school systems to notify parents of their ability to opt out of the school student list provided to recruiters, and this notification process is generally completed at the beginning of each school year. In order to begin the enlistment process for individuals under 18 years old, a recruiter must have the written permission of a parent, and once someone volunteers and is processed administratively, the next three to six months are usually spent at home as a civilian waiting for a date to begin basic training. During this time, should an individual change his or her mind and choose not to serve, the military will separate

that individual accordingly. Thus, recruits may leave the military at their own request before reaching the age of 18 if they have not begun their training.

20. **Military Courses.** The Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) mission continues to motivate young people to be better citizens. The program works to instill in students in U.S. secondary educational institutions the values of citizenship, service to the community and the United States, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment. Participants in the program are provided an opportunity to acquire relevant knowledge and to develop personally. Schools conducting a program offer their students the challenge of intellectual inquiry under the direction of instructors who are experienced leaders. The program provides an atmosphere designed to develop the qualities of leadership. Through classroom and other instructional activities, the participants acquire the knowledge, self-discipline, patriotism, sense of responsibility, and respect for constituted authority that will better prepare them for the future. Participation in JROTC does not obligate the student to perform military or any other federal service.

21. The voluntary nature of the JROTC program is manifest, and there is no basis for concerns that students and guardians are not properly informed of its voluntary nature. JROTC remains a voluntary “elective” course from which students may withdraw any time. As an elective course, it is one of a number of other courses that students may seek to take from the respective course catalogues of their educational institutions, with the advice of parents, guardians, school counselors, and academic advisors. In addition, students must be selected by the JROTC instructor with the approval of the principal of the institution or his or her representative and must maintain acceptable standards of academic achievement and conduct. The voluntary nature of JROTC activities is also apparent from the fact that only a relatively small percentage of U.S. students participate in JROTC. Any attempt by a participating school district to mandate participation would be inconsistent with DoD’s established policies and practices for JROTC and would be a basis for terminating the program if the school district were not willing to align with established policies.

22. The JROTC conducts marksmanship training at select programs endorsed by the host school district under the guidance of the Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP). CMP is a national organization dedicated to training and educating U.S. citizens in responsible use of shooting sports through safety training, marksmanship training, and competitions with organizational award of trophies, prizes, badges, and other insignia to competitors. The only authorized marksmanship training in JROTC is with the use of the air rifle and under the direct supervision of the JROTC instructors. We note that the International Olympic Committee hosts more than 15 rifle marksmanship events in the Olympic program and that the JROTC air rifle training was developed from these events. This sport stresses control, discipline, concentration, and extreme precision.

Prohibition and Related Matters

23. **Criminal Legislation and Regulations in Force.** Regarding criminalization of recruitment or use of children under the age of 18, as discussed in our 2016 Report, U.S. federal and state law fully met U.S. OPAC obligations at the time of ratification and continue to do so. A comprehensive review of legislation was undertaken for this purpose at the time of ratification. Since ratifying, the United States has adopted additional legislation, in particular the Child Soldiers Accountability Act of 2008 (CSAA) and the CSPA, which was strengthened by the Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2018. In its instrument of ratification, the United States included an understanding that “the term ‘armed groups’ in Article 4 of the OPAC means nongovernmental armed groups such as rebel groups, dissident armed forces, and other insurgent groups.” See 64-71 and 83-88 of the Second Periodic Report for a discussion of U.S. criminal law and penalties concerning insurgent activities by nongovernmental actors against the United States, forced recruitment by nongovernmental armed groups, and recruitment of persons under 15 years of age to serve in an armed force or armed group. As noted above, the United States does not permit compulsory recruitment of any person under the age of 18 for any type of military service.

24. With regard to ratification of certain treaties, the United States does not have any new developments to report. See paragraph 24 of the Second Periodic Report.

25. Impunity. It is unclear to the U.S. government what reports about private military and security companies in Afghanistan and Iraq committing “grave violations of children’s rights” are being referenced. U.S. policy and practice are to ensure accountability for U.S. government-contracted personnel abroad. We note that the only conduct listed in the question that is potentially relevant to U.S. obligations under the OPAC is “recruitment”.

Protection, Recovery and Reintegration

26. Measures adopted to protect the rights of child victims. The United States continues to place great importance on disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and social reintegration of former child soldiers. As noted in our 2016 Report, where the U.S. military has detained individuals under the age of 18 in the past, the United States has developed programs to facilitate their eventual reintegration as productive citizens in their home countries, where practicable and consistent with security concerns. The United States is committed to assisting children affected by armed conflict to the extent possible. Our humanitarian assistance provides life-saving services, including medical care, food, shelter, and other basic needs to vulnerable displaced children, including those formerly associated with armed forces and groups. Humanitarian efforts are tailored to the unique needs of children of all ages including adolescents, children younger than five years of age, separated and unaccompanied minors, children with disabilities, survivors of violence, including sexual violence, and child members of minority groups. In addition, our assistance seeks to address other protection needs specific to children, such as family reunification, legal assistance to prevent statelessness, and child-friendly survivor-centered psychosocial support and dental care, among others.

27. The possibilities for and limitations on use of discretionary authority to grant exemptions from the terrorist activity bar in refugee determinations were described in detail in paragraphs 26–28 of the 2012 Written Replies. The United States also explained in paragraph 125 of its Second Periodic Report that the best interests of the child principle does not play a direct role in determining substantive eligibility for admission as a refugee. At the same time, the United States recognizes and supports the principle of taking into account the best interests of the child determination in adjudicating applications for asylum and refugee status, including determining appropriate interview and immigration hearing procedures, as applicable, and assessing the situation of child refugees on issues such as resettlement and custody determinations. The United States has strongly supported the increased use of best interests determinations in cooperation with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. For refugee cases, UNHCR makes a determination by a panel of experts about what is in the best interests of a child with regard to being resettled unaccompanied or not. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) assesses the eligibility of the child for refugee status and determines if all requisites are complete. In that case, USCIS will generally defer to the UNHCR assessment and approve eligibility for resettlement of the unaccompanied minor.

28. Treatment of children associated with armed groups. Recognizing that this issue is not relevant to U.S. obligations under the OPAC as, inter alia, it does not concern the recruitment or use of children by armed forces or groups, and further noting that the United States no longer operates detention facilities in Afghanistan, the United States reiterates its long-standing policy, applicable to its operations in Afghanistan, to conduct its operations in accordance with the law of war, including the humane treatment requirements of Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. In addition, U.S. military practices are consistent with Additional Protocol II and Article 75 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions.

29. With regard to possible investigation of torture or other ill-treatment of children documented in the referenced United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) report, the United States respectfully notes that longstanding DoD policy is to conduct investigations of alleged violations, such as detainee abuse, and the UNAMA report cited by the Committee includes responses from NATO Resolute Support mission officials reiterating

this policy and reaffirming that such investigations have been conducted regarding these allegations. The United States further notes that, through its advisory role with the Afghan military, it worked with security and law-enforcement personnel to prevent torture and other ill-treatment of children in the custody of the Afghan government and to protect children who had been victims of such treatment.

International Assistance and Cooperation

30. Arms Export and Military Assistance. Of the 15 governments included in the 2021 CSPA list, four governments received full waivers and six governments received partial waivers. The waiver provision of the CSPA provides the United States with the opportunity to provide assistance to a listed government's military to promote needed reforms and professionalize their armed forces to be more respectful of human rights, democratic values, and civilian control of the military. By linking waivers to specific actions by the government to address the problem of child soldiers, the United States can use the possibility of a waiver to provide an incentive for reform while continuing to work closely with the government to end the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers. The United States incorporates human rights training modules, including child soldier issues, into training programs, which serves to increase awareness of the problem and the international legal framework regarding use of children in armed conflict. For example, the possibility of a waiver contributed to security sector reforms implemented by the Government of Mali, which received a partial waiver under the CSPA in 2021 because, among other things, it is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers. This included entering into a Prevention Agreement on Child Soldiers with the UN in 2021, which would allow increased UN engagement with and monitoring of the Malian armed forces, as well as the prohibition announced by Imghad Tuareg and Allies Self-Defense Group (GATIA), a Malian non-state armed group, on the recruitment or use of child soldiers and the signing of an Action Plan by a coalition of non-state armed groups, including GATIA, and the UN.

31. As noted above, recent changes in U.S. law have strengthened some of the provisions of the CSPA. Specifically, as amended in 2018, the CSPA now requires the listing of foreign governments having police or other security forces that recruit or use child soldiers. It also requires the President to certify that governments receiving waivers under the CSPA are taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers. It further requires public and Congressional reporting with regard to Presidential waivers for CSPA-listed countries, as well as reporting on the justification for such waivers. Expanded reporting about the waiver process increases the information available to the public, which allows for a more informed public discourse about child soldier-related issues.

32. DOS supports international assistance programs targeted to address the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers, such as a UNICEF program titled "Child Soldier Demobilization and Recruitment Prevention in South Sudan." UNICEF is addressing the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers by engaging the Government of South Sudan to facilitate the effective and safe return of children associated with armed forces and armed groups. This program has led to the release of 345 child soldiers, and UNICEF continues to engage for the safe release of additional children.

Ratification of the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure

33. The United States participated in negotiating the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure but has no current plans to ratify it.

Implementation and Reporting

34. Through postings on the internet and other measures of dissemination, the Committee's recommendations, as set forth in its Concluding Observations, are available throughout the United States, including to the three branches of the U.S. government, as well as governmental entities at the state, tribal, and territorial levels, and to the general public,

including civil society organizations, youth groups, professional groups, and children. The same is true of the 2016 Report and the written replies to the list of issues submitted by the United States in 2017.

35. DOS publishes widely read reports that address the unlawful recruitment or use of child soldiers. Pursuant to the CSPA, as amended, the annual TIP Report includes a list of foreign governments identified during the reporting period as having governmental armed forces, police, or other security forces, or government-supported armed groups, that recruit or use child soldiers. In addition, the TIP Report is now also required to include information on the waivers of security assistance restrictions for CSPA-listed countries, which allow the provision of military assistance and licenses for direct commercial sales of military equipment that otherwise would have been restricted. The reports are available at www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/.

36. The annual DOS Country Reports on Human Rights Practices also include reporting on unlawful recruitment or use of child soldiers for each State reviewed and, in recent years, provide additional information, including trends toward improvement in each State or the lack thereof and the role of the government of each State engaging in or tolerating the use of child soldiers as defined in the CSPA. The reports covering 1999 to 2020 are available at <https://www.state.gov/reports-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/>. The important matters addressed in these reports and recommendations are subjects of significant interest, scrutiny, and debate in the United States and around the world.

37. In addition, as noted above, the United States intends to hold a civil society consultation with NGOs prior to its Committee presentation.
