



Hot Spots

Many countries in the United States (U.S.) Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR) are assessed by the U.S. Department of State to have high levels of human trafficking, mainly sex trafficking. Importantly, several countries are listed as Tier 2 Watch List or Tier 3 in the 2016 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. Only Chile and Colombia received the most positive assessments as Tier 1 countries. For a full report on all AOR countries and to learn of specific instances of TIP, please refer to the report available at <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/>.

Tier 2 Watch List:

Antigua & Barbuda
Bolivia
Costa Rica
Cuba
Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent &
The Grenadines
Trinidad & Tobago

Tier 3:

Belize
Haiti
Suriname
Venezuela



Case Examples

Case 1: In November 2014, Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Valas, a former New Hampshire National Guard Commander, was convicted of one count of sex trafficking of a minor in San Antonio, Texas. He claimed to have met the minor in order to interview her for research he was conducting at Syracuse University on the intersection between gangs and trafficking. The minor claimed that he paid to have sex with her on two occasions. Valas was sentenced to 15 years in prison. A federal appeals court upheld his conviction in May 2016.

Case 2: A court-martial judge found the coordinator for the sexual assault and harassment prevention program at Fort Hood, Texas guilty in March 2015 of organizing a prostitution ring. Sergeant First Class Gregory McQueen recruited cash-strapped female soldiers to have sex with other soldiers for money. McQueen was sentenced to 24 months in prison, demoted, and given a dishonorable discharge.

Case 3: While awaiting the arrival of President Obama in Cartagena, Colombia in April 2012, 13 U.S. Secret Service (USSS) personnel were accused of soliciting prostitutes and 12 U.S. Service members were accused of misconduct. The Office of the Inspector General found no evidence to support opening a formal investigation against the USSS personnel. However, five of the USSS personnel were removed from their positions and six were moved to different positions within the agency. Of the 12 U.S. Service members involved, seven Soldiers and two Marines received non-judicial punishment by the SOUTHCOM Commander and one Airman was administratively reprimanded for poor judgment.

Links to Mission & Readiness

TIP is a serious global issue found in the U.S. and throughout the SOUTHCOM AOR. As the case examples demonstrate, U.S. military members have been implicated in TIP or related crimes. In the AOR, TIP exists in various forms, including sex trafficking, labor trafficking and child soldiering. Criminal gangs such as MS-13 and other local street gangs are involved in sex trafficking. In addition, many SOUTHCOM countries have legalized prostitution and U.S. military personnel are prime targets for the sex industry. Contracting personnel also need to watch for signs of forced labor when issuing contracts on behalf of the government.

Actions for Commanders

Communicate clearly the U.S. Government's "zero tolerance" policy for TIP and each Department of Defense member's responsibility to prevent TIP. Ensure soldiers understand the link between prostitution and TIP, and that, although legal in some countries in the AOR, prostitution is often coerced and can involve underage individuals. Furthermore, it is a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice to solicit prostitution even in countries where it is legal. Ensure establishments are placed off limits through an established process and ensure all personnel are aware of the off-limits establishments. Ensure all personnel complete mandatory annual Combating Trafficking in Persons training, including the module focused on the SOUTHCOM AOR.