

THE SAME DAY US GETS GUILTY PLEA FROM CHILD SOLDIER, IT EXEMPTS YEMEN AND OTHERS FROM RESTRICTIONS ON USING CHILD SOLDIERS

The asshole in charge of shredding our Constitution has a really sick sense of humor. Yesterday, the same day the government got Omar Khadr to plead guilty to crimes that aren't crimes that occurred when he was a child, Obama issued this memorandum.

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, pursuant to section 404(c) of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008 (CSPA), title IV of the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 (Public Law 110 457), I hereby determine that it is in the national interest of the United States to waive the application to Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and Yemen of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA.

This memo appears to waive the following restriction, thereby allowing the US to fund operations with or make weapons sales to Chad, DRC, Sudan, and Yemen, even though the State Department has reason to believe they use child soldiers.

(a) In General- Subject to subsections (c), (d), and (e), none of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available for international military education and

training, foreign military financing, or the transfer of excess defense articles under section 116 or 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151n(f) and 2304(h)), the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2751), the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2008 (division J of Public Law 110-161) or under any other Act making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs may be obligated or otherwise made available, and no licenses for direct commercial sales of military equipment may be issued to the government of a country that is clearly identified, in the Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for the most recent year preceding the fiscal year in which the appropriated funds, transfer, or license, would have been used or issued in the absence of a violation of this title, as having governmental armed forces or government-supported armed groups, including paramilitaries, militias, or civil defense forces, that recruit and use child soldiers.

So, one of the side benefits of Yemen's cooperation with us on the war on terror is that it can conscript those under 18 and accept as volunteers those under 16 in its military.

This hopey changey thing is really beginning to overwhelm me.

Update: the State Department Report on Yemen last year described this use of child soldiers:

Reports of child soldiers increased in a number of armed conflicts across the country. According to the NGO Small Arms Survey, direct involvement in combat killed or injured hundreds of children annually.

The intermittent conflict in Saada, which began again in August, reportedly drew underage soldiers fighting for the government and the rebel Houthis (see section 1.g.). The Houthis reportedly used children as runners in between groups of fighters as well as to carry supplies and explosives, according to local children's rights NGO Seyaj. Tribes the government armed and financed to fight alongside the regular army used children younger than 18 in combat, according to reports by international NGOs such as Save the Children.

Married boys, ages 12 to 15 years, were reportedly involved in armed conflict beginning in November 2008 in Amran governorate between the Harf Sufian and al-Osaimat tribes. According to tribal custom, boys who married were considered adults who owed allegiance to the tribe. As a result, half of the tribal fighters in such conflicts were children who had volunteered to demonstrate their tribal allegiance.

It also described the sex trafficking in girls.

There were reports of underage internal sex trafficking during the year. According to a local human rights NGO, an unknown number of women were trafficked from their homes to other regions within the country for the purposes of prostitution.

Though the report says most sex slaves worked in hotels, casinos, and nightclubs, if any of them were used by the armed forces, they would also count as child soldiers.

Update: See this exchange between harpie and powwow, who were discussing this earlier this month.