A man offered Mariam’s father an advance payment of US $6,000 for her, promising she would work for a family in Dubai, with a one-year contract and then return home. (See pg. 7 for information on the campaign.)

The father sent Mariam out of the country to escape the increasing hardship and daily violence, as well as help provide for the family. However, she managed to escape and is now back in Baghdad being helped by the NGO Organization for Women’s Freedom.

The Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report 2007 identified Iraq as being a destination country for South Asian workers, and a source country for women taken abroad for sexual exploitation.

‘Free the Slaves’ is conducting a campaign, WarSlavery, in order to pressure the US government to recognize that war-related demand for cheap, disposable and non-Iraqi workers has led to exploitation that the American government should address. (See pg. 7 for information on the campaign.)
Iraqi Women  cont. from pg. 1

Although trafficking and prostitution are illegal in the six nations of the Gulf, the region remains a popular and common destination for trafficked women. An estimated 10,000 women from sub-Saharan Africa, eastern Europe, Asia and parts of the Middle East may be victims of sex trafficking in the UAE, according to the U.S. Trafficking in Persons’ Report of June, 2007.
As long as there is a market for women abroad, the problem will continue and worsen stated a representative from the NGO Women’s Freedom.
They estimate that nearly 3,500 Iraqi women have gone missing since the US-led occupation of Iraq began in 2003 and that there is a high chance many have been traded for sex work. As many as 25 per cent of these women have been trafficked abroad since the start of 2006, many unaware of their fate. (http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=10891)

Filipinos Exploited in Iraq

Trained as an air conditioning repairman and technician, Ramil Autencio dreamed of making a better life in the Philippines for himself and his family with the promise of a good-paying job at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Kuwait. He never suspected that weeks after leaving home in December 2003 he would be living a wartime nightmare in northern Iraq, pushing boulders 11 hours a day, seven days a week for First Kuwaiti General Trading and Contracting (FKGTC), fortifying a U.S. military camp in Tikrit.
Because he had only a one-month travel visa to Kuwait, FKGTC offered him one of three options: pay a $1,000 penalty and work unpaid in Kuwait for six months, be arrested and jailed, or work in Iraq.
In the chilly January and February nights of 2004, he and seven other Filipinos lived in an empty truck container with no windows and slept on cardboard boxes for a bed. The only way they could get enough food was to

Embassy  cont. from pg. 1

dent of Baghdad’s city utilities.
Despite a U.S. State Department inspector general investigation finding ‘nothing of note,’ concerned individuals continue to cite instances of appalling living conditions, abuse and coerced labor, suggesting the allegations against FKGTC remain unresolved.
Thousands of low-paid migrant workers recruited from South Asia, the Philippines and other nations began pouring into Baghdad in 2005, to build the gargantuan complex. But during FKGTC’s rush to finish by the summer of 2007, American managers and specialists involved with the project began protesting about the living and working conditions of lower-paid workers sequestered and largely unseen behind security walls bordering the embassy project inside the U.S.-controlled Green Zone.
The Americans protested that construction crews lived in crowded quarters, ate substandard food and had little medical care. When drinking water was scarce in the blistering heat, coolers were filled on the banks of the Tigris, a river rife with waterborne disease, sewage and sometimes floating bodies. Others questioned why FKGTC held the passports of workers. Was it to keep them from escaping? Some laborers had turned up “missing” with little subsequent investigation. One American said laborers told him they had been misled. When recruited, they were unaware they were heading for war-torn Iraq.
After hearing similar allegations during much of 2006, Howard J. Krongard, the State Department’s inspector general, flew to Baghdad for what he describes as a “brief” review on Sept. 15. He reported in a nine-page memorandum posted on the U.S. State Department’s website that the complaints had no substance. “Nothing came to our attention,” he wrote. More importantly, after interviewing an unstated number of workers from the Philippines, India, Nepal and Pakistan, Krongard said no evidence was found of labor smuggling, trafficking or other abuses. A former FKGTC employee viewed Krongard’s report as “a whitewash.”
Meanwhile, Justice Department trial attorneys have been contacting former FKGTC employees and others for interviews and documents, as they investigate allegations of labor trafficking. (Excerpted from David Phinney, IraqSlogger. 06.01.2007. http://www.alternet.org/story/52793)
Thousands of Asians Trafficked to US Military Bases in Iraq

In October 2005 a Chicago Tribune article triggered an investigation by the US State Dept.’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Dept. of Defense.

The article described alleged abuses involving contractors and subcontractors ‘employed directly or indirectly by the U.S. government’ at American facilities in Iraq under a multibillion-dollar privatization contract that cost taxpayers more than $12 billion.

The contract is held by the former Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR). KBR relies on more than 200 subcontractors, many based in the Middle East, to carry out the military support contract. Roughly 35,000 so-called third-country nationals are employed under the contract, many of them performing menial labor on bases for the Middle Eastern subcontractors.

KBR left virtually every facet of the recruitment, hiring and mobilization of workers to its subcontractors. Along with the U.S. military, KBR allowed subcontractors to hire workers from Nepal, which bans labor agents from sending their citizens to Iraq. Thus many had to be brought in through illicit channels or fraudulent methods.

The article documented how 12 men were recruited from Nepal with contracts filed with their government falsely promising them jobs at a five-star hotel in Amman, Jordan. The men changed hands at least four times before landing in an unprotected convoy, compelled to head into the Iraqi war zone in order to repay huge family debts incurred through fees demanded by brokers in Nepal.

Subcontractors and brokers routinely seized workers’ passports, deceived them about their safety or contract terms and, in at least one case, allegedly tried to force terrified men into the war zone from a neighboring country under the threat of cutting off their food and water.

All 12 of these Nepalese victims were ultimately kidnapped and executed by Iraqi militants, the single worst massacre of foreign workers in Iraq since the American-led invasion.

(Excerpted Chicago Tribune, 01.19.2006)

Other Abuses Reported:

• Sri Lankans were recruited to work in Kuwait and make two/three times their normal salary. They were not paid and only received an advance of $50. They slept ten to a room on thin mattresses. One worker, suffering from diarrhea and vomiting, was told his condition was not severe since he had worked all day without reporting it. The doctor said “deal with it or go back” to Sri Lanka.

• A typical meal is mostly rice with a side of ‘slop’. It is hit-and-miss whether they get vegetables.

• 6,000 workers have no dentist and must travel to Kuwait for treatment at their own expense.

• Incoming laborers are still paying agency fees and, though they now carry their passports and a copy of their contract, for many the front passport pages had been ripped out.

• One Indian worker had been handcuffed to a post for hours.

First Kuwaiti and a spokesperson for KBR continue to deny any problems. (Excerpted from: http://www.alternet.org/waroniraq/57974/)

Similar allegations had already been raised in 2004 with then Dept. of Defense Inspector General, Joseph Schmitz. It took a year for Schmitz to reply, stating that living conditions “required further attention” but not mentioning passport seizures or violations of U.S. trafficking laws.

Two weeks later Schmitz resigned and took a job with Blackwater USA, a private security contractor.

(See Blackwater article on pg. 4)

Filipinos cont. from pg. 2

eat leftovers and ready-to-eat meals from soldiers. Showers to wash off the day’s sweat were an uncertainty.

When he and 40 other Filipinos plotted to escape, Autencio befriended a sympathetic Filipino soldier in the U.S. Army who persuaded a driver of a flatbed truck headed south towards the Kuwaiti border to take the group with him. For three nights they rode in darkness, packed tight on a truck with very little food or water. “We were nearly starved,” Autencio said.

When they arrived at the border, the sheer number of desperate Filipinos arriving without papers stunned the Kuwaiti police, who tried to prevent them from leaving Iraq.

“We were even angrier then, because one of us had died, so there was nothing they could do to stop us,” Autencio continued. “We pushed them away when they asked for our papers. ... We outnumbered them.”

The group made their way to the Philippines embassy, where the ambassador reluctantly allowed them shelter until their return home could be arranged. For a while, Kuwaiti police waited outside planning to arrest them, Autencio said.

Autencio’s story is now featured in the new documentary Someone Else’s War, circulating in the Philippines and at U.S. film festivals. (See pg. 7.) (Excerpted from http://www.alternet.org/story/54648/ 06.20.2007.)
Military ‘Rest Breaks’ in Rio

Rio de Janeiro has been a tourist attraction for over two million foreigners each year. Today that includes a growing number of war-weary North American servicemen taking advantage of the US government’s ‘Rest and Recuperation’ scheme. Begun in 2004 the rest break is geared towards soldiers involved in Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom based in 16 countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, Pakistan, Syria, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It provides 15 days’ holiday, with transportation paid. Private security forces and contractors from companies such as Halliburton and Control Risks Group also take such breaks.

One of the companies behind this new influx to Brazil is Miami-based ‘Tours Gone Wild’, whose website features photo galleries of ‘Brazil Girl hotties’ and videos of muscular men admiring women in nightclubs. “The military found us by accident,” said the company’s co-founder. “They started e-mailing us from tents in Iraq. Now we get e-mails and calls from Afghanistan, Iraq, Germany and Kuwait.” The tour company offers 10-day packages to Rio for around $3,000. TGW expects to bring around 300 soldiers and contractors to Brazil during 2007. The number of military customers has quadrupled since the beginning of the Iraq war. TGW said the tours are so successful that most of their military clients come through a colleague’s recommendation.

Besides upmarket nightclubs and prostitution venues in Rio’s beachside districts, trips to the city’s massage parlors are popular, although TGW directors insist their guides are forbidden from taking clients there. One popular attraction for the military is a venue where, for a cover price of $150, the soldier gets a white dressing gown and a choice of its call girls.

In the 1950s, during the Korean war, prostitutes known as ‘military comfort women’ flocked to ‘rest and recreation’ sites in South Korea to earn money from troops. During the Vietnam war, Bangkok was at the center of a huge influx of soldiers, with troops dubbing rest and recreation excursions ‘intoxication and intercourse breaks’. Saigon became a nightlife hotspot in the mid-1970s as GIs kicked back in bars and brothels, spawning huge prostitution and drugs industries. Little has been written about the sexual escapades of troops based in Iraq, although reports have emerged of at least one brothel in Baghdad’s Green Zone. Some suggest that because Iraq is Islamic, and because of high danger levels outside camps, soldiers have looked to other regions.

The increase in women soldiers is also taking such breaks. Many of these are former U.S. Special Forces who wanted to earn more money.

Our American Dilemma:
• Advocating the removal of U.S. troops does not yet include any provision for withdrawing these ‘outsourced’ soldiers as well;
• Advocating continued presence of U.S. troops implies ongoing use of taxpayer money to train troops, many of whom then leave the military so as to be hired back by the U.S. government at further taxpayer expense and Blackwater’s huge profit. Robert Greenwald, in his 75-minute film ‘Iraq for Sale’ (see pg. 7), exposes the $millions earned in profits by corporations such as Halliburton, CACI, Titan, Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR), and Blackwater, as well as by their executives.
Eventual ‘Reforms’

In April 2006, following an inspection of the allegations reported by the Chicago Tribune, Gen. George Casey, the top U.S. commander in Iraq at that time, ordered sweeping changes for privatized military support operations after confirming violations of human-trafficking laws and other abuses by contractors involving thousands of foreign workers on American bases.

Contractors were ordered to return passports that were illegally confiscated from laborers on U.S. bases. Casey’s office concluded that the practice of confiscating passports from such workers was both widespread on American bases and in violation of the U.S. trafficking laws.

The military also confirmed a host of other abuses during the inspection, including deceptive hiring practices; excessive fees charged by overseas job brokers who lure workers into Iraq; substandard living conditions once laborers arrive; violations of Iraqi immigration laws; and a lack of mandatory “awareness training” on U.S. bases concerning human trafficking.

Casey’s orders promised harsh actions against firms that fail to return passports or end other abusive practices. Contracts could be terminated, contractors could be blacklisted from future work, and commanders could physically bar firms from bases.

Under future contracts, Casey required that all firms, no matter how far down the chain, “provide workers with a signed copy of their employment contract that defines the terms of their employment.”

He ordered contracts to include “measurable, enforceable standards for living conditions (e.g., sanitation, health, safety, etc.) and established 50 feet as the minimum acceptable square footage of personal living space per worker.”

Contractors and subcontractors also must “comply with international laws” regarding transit, exit and entry procedures, “requirements for work visas,” and Iraqi immigration laws.

The orders also mandated that future contracts and subcontracts include “language that prohibits contractors and subcontractors at all tiers from utilizing unlicensed recruiting firms, or firms that charge illegal recruiting fees.”


Reforms Still In Question

During testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Oversight Committee in late July 2007, Rory Mayberry, a former subcontract employee of the FKGTC, said he believed that at least 52 Filipino nationals had been kidnapped to work on the embassy project. He stated:

“Mr. Chairman, when the airplane took off and the captain announced that we were heading to Baghdad, all ‘you-know-what’ broke out on the airplane. The men started shouting; it wasn’t until the security guy working for First Kuwaiti waved an MP5 [submachine-gun] in the air that the men settled down. They realized that they had no other choice but to go to Baghdad ...

I’ve read the State Department inspector general’s report on the construction of the embassy. Mr Chairman, it’s not worth the paper it’s printed on. This is a cover-up and I’m glad that I’ve had the opportunity to set the record straight.”

“Even if there are 15 layers between the firm that originally recruited the worker and the U.S. government, one has to require the last subcontractor to inquire of the workers how they got there.”

John Miller, former Director of the Trafficking Office
Advocacy

Follow-Up to July Stop Trafficking

Francesca Tanksley informed Stop Trafficking that her Unitarian Church community wrote 72 letters to their senators requesting improved state trafficking legislation based on recommendations in the ‘Report Card’ from the Center for Women Policy Studies. Thank you, Francesca!

Sheila O’Gorman RSM, Mercy International Justice Office Europe, reported that Mercy Sisters in Ireland have made significant contributions to counter trafficking, including: addressing Senators; engaging in lobbying and advocacy; making submissions to recent Bills, in particular the ‘Scheme for Criminal Law (Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Offenses) Bill’ 2006 and ‘The Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill’ 2007; setting up an intercongregational group called APT (Act to Prevent Trafficking); raising awareness of the issue both locally and nationally; responding to the recent TIP (Trafficking in Persons) report in relation to Ireland; and by making funds available for research.

Sisters have befriended trafficked people, helped to secure safe places for them, referred them to appropriate agencies, and have networked with NGOs nationally and internationally. Dale Jarvis RSM forwarded this report to Stop Trafficking.

Thank you, Sheila and Dale!

CT Conference: Trafficking in U.S.A.

The purpose of the October 24, 2007 conference is to provide training for service professionals, including medical personnel, social workers and other social service providers, law enforcement, members of different faith communities and the general public on the issue of human trafficking.

The International Institute of Connecticut is co-hosting the conference with Fairfield University.

The goal is to have participants come away with an awareness that trafficking is a crime that does not just happen elsewhere, but that is occurring in the US and in Connecticut. Participants will also be given tools to understand how to recognize a potential trafficking situation and what to do if and when they come in contact with a victim of trafficking.

Florrie Burke, former Senior Director of International Programs at Safe Horizon (NYC) will be the keynote speaker. There will be afternoon workshops covering labor issues, trauma and other mental health concerns, law enforcement issues and the trafficking of US born girls and women within the country. Registration of $25 is required. Breakfast and lunch included.

Visit the conference website for more information: http://www.fairfield.edu/cfpl_htraffic.html or contact Jane Rodas at: projrescue@iiconn.org.

Child Soldiers Need Our Voice

Government forces, rebel groups, armed militia and mercenaries operating in conflicts in at least 12 countries recruit children to serve as soldiers or are responsible for murdering, torturing and committing sexual crimes against them, according to a 2006 UN report.

The report lists parties in Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda as recruiting or using children as armed combatants or committing other abuses and violations against them. (See pg. 7)


Action:
Contact your U.S. senators and urge them to support the pending legislation (S. 1175) that restricts U.S. support of countries that use children for war. See pg. 7 for the website that will give you the current status of this bill.

Contribute Ideas for Action:
The activity undertaken by your organization may provide valuable ideas for others in our collaborative efforts to stem the abuses of human trafficking.
Send information to: jeansds2000@yahoo.com
US Embassy in Iraq
The embassy construction continues to be plagued by reports of forced labor and human trafficking with no credible investigation of these allegations. The U.S. State Department’s Inspector General did release a report on his visit to the compound, but ‘Free the Slaves’ has found serious gaps in his analysis.

The WarSlavery Campaign calls on the Inspector General to amend or retract the report, and start the investigation over again with appropriate methodology and trained staff, and with visits to every State Department contract in Iraq.

30 Trafficked Workers Rescued
The International Office of Migration reported the repatriation of 30 Sri Lankans who had been trafficked into Iraq. Subsequent IOM press releases named the labor broker who tricked these workers into Iraq. The IOM has not publicly released the names of the companies implicated in this trafficking case.

‘Free the Slaves’ calls on the US government to ensure these companies are defunded and are added to the debarment database, so they will not receive future contracts paid for by US taxpayers.

For over a year the WarSlavery Campaign has demanded:
• Victims of human trafficking in Iraq be freed, receive compensation for the crimes committed against them, and receive assistance in rebuilding their lives.
• Contractors and sub-contractors guilty of human trafficking be punished to the full extent of the law for this crime and that all their US government contracts be cancelled with no chance of renewal.
• Adequate regulations, training, supervision, monitoring and enforcement be put in place to prevent further trafficking abuses committed under US government control and with US taxpayer dollars.
• New contracts be awarded only to those organizations that have strict internal policies, training programs and reporting mechanisms on human trafficking.
• Efforts taken to end contractor-sponsored trafficking should be reported to the public.

Stop Trafficking!
is dedicated exclusively to fostering an exchange of information among religious congregations, their friends and collaborating organizations, working to eliminate all forms of trafficking of human beings.

Use the following web address to access back issues of Stop Trafficking!

To contribute information, or make requests to be on the mailing list, please use this e-mail address: jeansds2009@yahoo.com

Support the WarSlavery Campaign
http://www.warslavery.org/

‘Free the Slaves’ has reported that MSNBC, NBC, Slate, the Wall Street Journal, Kuwait Times, independent journalist David Phinney, the International Office on Migration (IOM), the US State Department’s Trafficking in Persons (TIP) office and the State Dept’s Inspector General’s office have all reported on trafficking in Iraq.

Informative Web Sites:
(Each contains information related to human trafficking)

Movies:
Iraq For Sale
http://iraqforsale.org/
http://iraqforsale.org/profiteers.php
Rebuttal by Halliburton
http://iraqforsale.org/hbattack.php

SomeOne Else’s War
http://someoneelseswar.com/

Senate Bill on Child Soldiers
S 1175
http://thomas.loc.gov/

International Institute of Connecticut, Inc.
www.iiconn.org
ICCR
http://www.iccr.org/join/advocates.php

Shareholders Are Concerned
The Interfaith Center on Corporate responsibility (ICCR) is considering resolutions addressing some of the concerns involving U.S. contracts with sub-contractors in Iraq.

Learn more, become an ICCR advocate, and mention your concerns to key corporations.

Editing and Layout:
Jean Schafer, SDS