Los Angeles Times

Foster Parents to Get Training to Combat Child Sex Trafficking (June 24): Los Angeles County supervisors voted Tuesday to create a new training program for foster parents and group home staff to help them identify and help children who might be victims of sex trafficking. The county created a task force in November 2012 to deal with the issue of youth in the foster care system being recruited or forced into the sex trade. Statistics from the county probation department at that time showed that 59% of youths arrested on prostitution-related charges countywide in 2010 were in the foster care system, and county officials said in some cases, pimps recruited girls from group homes.

New York Times

Malaysia’s Dismal Trafficking Record (July 1): In its 2014 Trafficking in Persons report released June 20, the U.S. State Department downgraded Malaysia to its lowest Tier 3 status. The downgrade puts Malaysia at risk of American economic and diplomatic penalties. Thailand, recently in the news for its reliance on slave labor in its seafood industry, was also downgraded to Tier 3, as were Venezuela and Gambia. These four countries join North Korea, Iran, Zimbabwe and 16 other countries as those doing the least to combat human trafficking. The government of Malaysia has been quick to protest, charging that the downgrade was based on flawed information. Malaysia’s robust economy is a magnet for migrants from poorer neighboring countries, including Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar. The evidence suggests Malaysia remains more concerned about managing immigration flows and helping employers than it is about the welfare of trafficked persons. The State Department report cites victims of human trafficking among the estimated two million documented foreign workers in Malaysia and the additional two million or more undocumented foreign workers in the country. The government of Malaysia protests that it has launched an amnesty program for undocumented workers — and that it has agreed to share information about migrant workers with six countries, including the United States. These steps are potentially helpful, but they focus on managing illegal migrants rather than on helping trafficking victims. The State Department report cites fewer prosecutions for trafficking violations in Malaysia in 2013 than in 2012, and no investigations, prosecutions or convictions of government employees or recruiters complicit in human trafficking. Traffickers, unethical employers and corrupt officials in Malaysia have little to risk and much to gain from exploiting trafficking victims.

Are Your Food and Clothes Produced With Slave Labor (June 30): Given that much of this slave labor and trafficking activity occurs in secret, far from America’s shores, it can be hard for consumers to know whether a seafood supplier in Thailand or a clothes manufacturer in Bangladesh has built its business on the backs of indentured or otherwise abused workers. Representative Carolyn Maloney, Democrat of New York, is seeking to compel more transparency through a bill introduced earlier this month in Congress. The legislation would require companies with over $100 million in global gross receipts to publicly disclose any measures they have taken to prevent human trafficking, slavery and child labor as part of their annual reports to the Securities and
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Exchange Commission. The bill seems carefully crafted not to impose onerous new burdens on business. While companies would have to make reports to the SEC, they wouldn’t be required to take specific actions, just disclose whatever steps they feel have been necessary to combat trafficking and slave labor. Although the bill isn’t a panacea, at least it would provide consumers with information they don’t have access to now about what companies are doing, or not doing, to avoid using slave or trafficked labor and would serve as an incentive for companies to take a closer look at their supply chains.

Thai Seafood is contaminated by Human Trafficking (June 21): Shrimp and other seafood fishing is a big business in Thailand. The industry employs more than 650,000 people and annually produces more than $7 billion in exports that show up on dinner tables all over the world, including in the United States. It also has a horrific dark side. Its reliance on slave labor is so pervasive and ugly that the State Department now lists Thailand as one of the worst violators among 188 countries judged every year on how they deal with human trafficking. The ratings were begun 14 years ago, after the United States enacted an anti-trafficking law and the United Nations adopted the Palermo Protocol. Both call for countries to criminalize trafficking, punish offenders and provide shelter and support to victims. The State Department’s annual human trafficking report, released on Friday, is an important part of this effort, systematically chronicling abuses and government efforts to stop them. Thailand has long been a magnet for migrants from neighboring countries. These migrants now number two to three million people. Tens of thousands of them are victims of trafficking — vulnerable men, women and children, some forced into the Thai sex trade, others pushed into garment manufacturing and domestic work. Now comes growing evidence that many are also being exploited in fishing and fishing-related industries. The report builds on recent investigations by Reuters, the Environmental Justice Foundation and The Guardian newspaper, which found that slavery is central to the shrimp industry’s success. Slave labor has also been documented on ships flying the flags of Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong, among others. It is estimated that there could be 29 million victims of all sorts of human trafficking around the globe, including thousands in the United States.

San Francisco Chronicle

Phoenix Policeman Arrested in Prostitution Sting (June 20): Authorities in Glendale say they’ve arrested a veteran Phoenix police officer in a prostitution sting. Glendale police say Lt. John Geroulis was taken into custody Thursday night on suspicion of soliciting prostitution and sexual abuse. They say the 51-year-old Geroulis was arrested as part of a multi-agency undercover operation targeting human trafficking and prostitution. Police say Geroulis allegedly made unwanted sexual contact with an undercover Glendale detective but declined to disclose any details. Phoenix police say the 25-year veteran suddenly retired Friday.

Human Trafficking a Blight in Progressive Bay Area (May 31): In a 2009 report, the FBI identified 13 areas with the largest incidence of child sex trafficking in the nation - and one of them was San Francisco. In July 2013, Bay Area law enforcement worked with the FBI on an operation to rescue a dozen children here and charge 17 adults with exploiting them. While very little research has been done to determine the extent of human trafficking on
a state-by-state basis, the U.S. attorney general’s office reported that California identified 1,277 victims between mid-2010 and mid-2012, and that those numbers are assumed to be very low.

**Houston Chronicle**

**Wisconsin Man Charged with Human Trafficking in North Dakota** (June 24): A Wisconsin man is accused of bringing females to North Dakota against their will to engage in prostitution in the state’s western oil patch. Levell Durr, 31, was charged Friday in U.S. District Court in Bismarck with transportation for illegal sexual activity. Magistrate Judge Charles Miller appointed him a public defender Monday and scheduled him held until a detention hearing on Thursday. An affidavit by FBI Special Agent Bruce Bennett says Durr has been trafficking females since at least April, when police in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, reported that a woman had told them Durr was holding three girls against their will. The affidavit accuses Durr of using drugs and physical violence to keep the females compliant. It says that at one point he kept a girl in a dog kennel for days for breaking one of his rules. The women were not allowed to maintain eye contact with men and were told to kiss Durr’s hand when they turned over money to him.

**NBC News**

**FBI Rescues 168 of ‘America’s Children’ from Sex Traffickers** (June 23): The FBI has rescued 168 children — the youngest 11 years old, and some of them never reported missing — in a coast-to-coast crackdown on sex traffickers, officials said Monday. The week-long operation, called “Cross County VIII,” resulted in the arrest of 281 pimps who recruited minors off street corners, at truck stops and online. Some of the victims were in the child-welfare system before they went missing, said John Ryan of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which partnered with the FBI. The latest operation took place in 106 cities across the nation. Officials said both the victims and their captors were generally American citizens. The operation began at the local level with prostitution and solicitation arrests. The FBI then used that information to zero in on organized trafficking efforts.