



Airline Ambassadors
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Ms. Nancy L. Rivard
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June 13, 2011
House Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights

It's an honor to address the US Congress Committee on Foreign Affairs, Sub-Committee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights.

I founded Airline Ambassadors in 1996 for airline personnel using their travel privileges to help children. We are the only humanitarian organization of the overall airline industry and are leading the effort to raise awareness on the issue of human trafficking.

In 2009, on a humanitarian mission in Cambodia, we rescued an abandoned little girl in the slums outside Angkor Wat (American Way – September 2010). We also learned that there were thousands more girls like her, who have been ‘sold’ by their families, like merchandise into lives of sexual slavery. Many of these are transported on commercial airlines and this is why I knew Airline Ambassadors had to get involved.

On our next humanitarian mission to the Dominican Republic, our team reviewed behavioral indicators of trafficking victims and their predators, and stayed alert as we boarded our flights back to the U.S. Astonishingly, we correctly identified trafficking situations on each of our departing flights – on Delta, Jetblue and USAir! The flight attendants on each airline did not know what to look for and how to respond, but were anxious to help after we told them what they should do. We realized how vital a role that airline personnel could play as a front line of defense for international security.

Congressman Chris Smith and Joe Pitts supported us by hosting Congressional Briefings to Airline Partners and Embassies to encourage airlines and airports to raise awareness about this issue and outreach to the travel industry. American Airlines issued a Bulletin to flight attendants as a direct response to these briefings and several Embassies offered to connect



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us to their domestic airlines and airports. Funding is needed for training and materials.

I would like to acknowledge Delta Airlines as the first U.S. Airline to sign the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel, as well as Carlson Companies, Hilton Worldwide and Global Exchange Tours. The “Code” is an industry driven responsible tourism initiative, demonstrating global corporate social responsibility on this issue.

Airline Ambassadors has developed a training specific for airline, airport and hotel employees to identify the visible signs of trafficking and protocols to respond. We provided a training just before the SuperBowl, which had an overwhelming response and was attended by flight crews from four airlines, TSA, and airport employees. 10,000 wallet cards with red flag “indicators” were distributed to participants and to flight attendants on flights out of DFW.

It is estimated that 800,000 persons are trafficked across international borders each year. Every week, we receive reports from flight attendants who are seeing cases of trafficking. Yesterday, I learned about an observant passenger who alerted a Swiss Air crew (Zurich to Chicago) of a suspicious situation with 30 young girls, the flight returned to the gate and airport security dealt with the situation. The Swiss Air Crew said they see similar situations all the time – but didn’t know what kind of action they should take.

We ask for your support in engaging the travel industry to implement training programs specifically addressing human trafficking. This committee is invited to review our training and help promote it as a “best practice” for airlines, airports and hotel staff around the world. The airline industry already provides recurrent emergency training for crews each year and incorporating this subject would not be expensive or difficult.

On May 31, 2011, the flight attendant unions APFA (Association of Professional Flight Attendants) and the AFA (Association of Flight



Attendants) collectively representing 70,000 flight attendants from 22 airlines joined Airline Ambassadors at Dulles Airport for the signing of landmark human trafficking legislation by the Governor of Virginia.

We are also partnering with the First Lady of the Dominican Republic, Sra Margarita de Fernandez, to launch the first human trafficking web portal during the United Nations General Assembly in September 2011. I am honored to extend a personal invitation to each member of the Foreign Relations Committee to join us at this historic event.

As you are aware, Human Trafficking is a major human rights issue of our time. It is not just the latest cause....it is impacting lives every day. I met a young trafficked boy in Haiti last week that was so severely abused he did not know his own name. I saw three young victims thrown in a dark, mosquito infested jail, with nothing but one blanket on the filthy cement floor – simply because there was no where else to put them. The Bureau for the Protection of Minors picked up 13,000 trafficked children in Haiti in the last year. We are building safe houses to protect these children and get them the care they need. Please support our efforts to raise awareness in the travel industry and protect children in the U.S. and around the world.