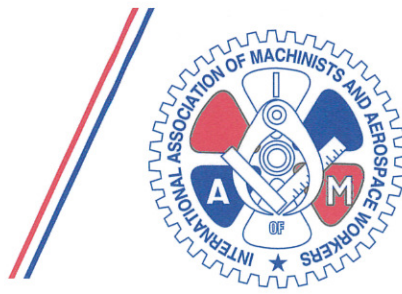


**International
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OFFICE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

July 27, 2015

International President R. Thomas Buffenbarger issued the following statement on the release of the U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Persons report that upgrades Malaysia to Tier 2 status:

"Today's incredulous upgrading of Malaysia in the U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report makes a mockery of a once vitally important report and ensures that the Trans-Pacific Partnership will represent a new low in the global exploitation of workers.

The upgrade of Malaysia in the TIP report is stunning given the discovery in May of a mass grave containing the bodies of 139 migrant workers and yesterday's article in the Wall Street Journal, *Palm-Oil Workers Tell of Abuses on Malaysian Plantations*, that details the slave like conditions of migrant palm oil workers in Malaysia. Further evidence of human exploitation comes from today's New York Times, *'Sea Slaves': The Human Misery that Feeds Pets and Livestock*, which describes the horrendous conditions aboard fishing boats in southeast Asia and the lack of oversight by officials in Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia.

One must be blind to the transparent reality of human suffering detailed in the international press, or motivated by crass political concerns to not see the grievous exploitation taking place on a daily basis in Malaysia and other countries in the region. We call upon Congress to investigate this misuse of the Trafficking in Human Persons report and to take actions to reinstate the integrity of the TIP report."