



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

USAID Provides \$70 million in Humanitarian Aid

The United States Embassy and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) announced on June 10, 2008 that the American people, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has provided approximately \$70 million in emergency humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia in the last two months.



USAID's Glenn Anders (far left) introduces Amb. Yamamoto, Mohammed Diab and Ato Simon Mechale at a press conference held on June 10, 2008 to announce the U.S. assistance.

United States Ambassador Donald Yamamoto joined Mo-

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U.S Embassy Sponsors Youth Leadership Forum for Ethiopian Universities



Public Affairs Counselor Michael McClellan interacting with university students

Over fifty student leaders from throughout Ethiopia gathered in Debrezeit this week to discuss "Economic Empowerment and Social Responsibility." The second annual National Students Leadership Forum, sponsored by the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Section, brought dynamic, young men and women from almost all of Ethiopia's universities together for the four day

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USAID Provides \$70 million in Humanitarian Aid . . .

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ammed Diab, WFP Representative and Country Director in Ethiopia, USAID/Ethiopia Mission Director Glenn Anders and Ethiopian Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency (DPPA) Director Ato Simon Mechale to highlight the donations.

“The United States remains committed to working with other donors and the Ethiopian government to ensure food security for all Ethiopian citizens. International support for Ethiopians is particularly important in a year when food insecurity has been exacerbated by the lack of March to April ‘belg’ rains,” explained Ambassador Yamamoto.

Diab added, “This support has helped WFP to continue to assist millions of Ethiopians in need of food. We appreciate USAID’s consistent, and increasing support for WFP’s emergency and development operations. However, as the numbers of people now in need of urgent relief assistance has risen to 4.5 million and another 5.8 PSNP beneficiaries will require additional food and cash transfers, a large food shortfall remains.”

The United States Government donation has come in response to the

continuing humanitarian needs in Ethiopia, where combined effects of delayed and sporadic seasonal rains, failed belg crop production and high food prices are contributing to food insecurity, diminished pasture, and water shortage.

The \$70 million donation, from USAID’s Food for Peace Program through WFP, provides Ethiopia with 95,510 metric tons (MT) of food aid, consisting of sorghum, wheat flour, corn soy blend, and vegetable oil. The majority of supplies, provided largely through the drawdown of the United States’ Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust, are expected to arrive in Ethiopia in July.

This donation enhances ongoing U.S. Government efforts to address drought and humanitarian needs in Ethiopia. USAID’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has been working and providing assistance in drought-prone areas, and has provided more than \$10 million in non-food assistance in fiscal year (FY) 2008 to address drought-related vulnerabilities. USAID/OFDA’s activities have included the implementation of a measles vaccination campaign in Somali Region; treatment and vaccination of livestock in Somali and Oromiya re-

gions; establishment of outpatient therapeutic programs and stabilization centers in Amhara, Oromiya, SNNP, and Tigray regions; and expansion and rehabilitation of water supply systems in Oromiya, SNNP, and Somali regions.

Since 1991, USAID has provided more than \$2.85 billion in humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia, including \$161.2 million in USAID/OFDA emergency interventions. Since July 2007 the USG has contributed 173,450 MT of emergency food assistance, valued at \$121 million. In addition, USAID has provided 208,600 MT of food assistance, valued at \$171 to WFP and NGO partners this fiscal year in support of the Productive Safety Net Program.

In Ethiopia, WFP’s second largest operation in Africa, the agency assists households facing chronic food insecurity and affected by natural disasters, refugees, pregnant and nursing mothers, school children and individuals infected or infected by HIV-AIDS. WFP also helps communities through land rehabilitation programmes, and plays a leading role in capacity development initiatives. ♦

U.S Embassy Sponsors Youth Leadership Forum for Ethiopian Universities . . .

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event to share experiences, discuss ways forward, and debate ideas of how to empower all of Ethiopia's communities economically, while developing a culture of social responsibility for both businesses and individuals.

Public Affairs Counselor Michael McClellan noted in his remarks that the three great Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – all of which have been in Ethiopia for centuries – teach their followers to give back to the community through tithing and Zakat. By sharing with those who are less fortunate, faith communities can help to empower others and build their self-confidence and personal dignity in ways that simple “charity” cannot. Economic empowerment, he said, is like a big circle in that when you help others to stand on their own, the entire community ultimately benefits through economic growth.

Participants in the Forum also met with H.E. President Girm Woldegiorgis, Minister of Education Dr. Sintayehu Woldemichael, and other prominent figures. Mr. McClellan congratulated the Forum for having such a diverse group of student leaders that reflected the many geographic regions of Ethiopia, different ethnic and religious groups, and the substantial number of young women leaders participating. ♦



Cultural Affairs Specialist Yoseph Shiferaw shares his ideas as students listen attentively

A Better Africa for Africans Is Goal of U.S. Policy

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington -- The ultimate goal of U.S. foreign policy in Africa is to create a better environment for Africans and better prospects for their future, and not to compete with China for influence.

Summing up U.S. policy toward China and its operations in Africa, Thomas Christensen, a deputy assistant secretary of state, said, "There is no zero-sum competition between China and the United States in Africa."

The United States "will continue to work with the Chinese to try to make their policies ... their investments and their assistance in Africa more effective for the long term. The best way to do that," he said, "is to have them along with others encourage African governments to adopt good governance practices and to create the foundations for long-term stability."

Christensen, deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs James Swan both made that point in testimony June 4 before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs.

Christensen said China, like the many nations that trade and invest in Africa, has multiple goals and three major objectives: to secure supplies of resources and markets for Chinese exports; to increase China's power and prestige on the international stage as a leader of the developing world; and to compete with Taiwan for diplomatic recognition by African states.

China's role in Africa from the U.S.

perspective, Christensen told the lawmakers, largely has been positive. "On an abstract level, China's own domestic reforms and opening up to the outside world provide a good example for some of the more insulated economies on the continent, and on a more concrete level, we believe that China's investment in infrastructure and in the building of businesses in Africa provides positive results for the African people."

The United States, Christensen said, "is encouraging China to do more in Africa (and worldwide), albeit in coordination with the United States, the major donors and the international institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank."

Christensen quickly cautioned, however, that "Chinese aid and investment policies are not transparent and ... generally lack the conditionality that has been attached by the leading donors and by those international institutions." That conditionality, he said, is "designed to encourage good governance," which he called "the foundation of sustained economic development there."

The United States engages China with regard to Africa on a broad array of senior-level dialogues, he told the lawmakers.

Christensen readily acknowledged that China's engagement in Africa has grown very quickly but cautioned everyone to "keep things in perspective." China's aid to Africa is somewhere between \$1 billion and \$2 billion annually, he said, an amount "significantly lower" than aid from the United States, the European Community and international institutions.

China's total investment stock to date in Africa, Christensen said, stands several times less than the level of U.S. investment. To put things in perspective, in the energy sector, he said, the United States estimates that China's production in Africa is about one-third of the total production of one U.S. firm -- Exxon Mobil Corp.

Going forward, Christensen said, the United States is "trying to encourage better aid and investment practices that will not only better assist African development but will ... help China's own reputation on the continent."

Christensen said the Chinese government is composed of "multiple agencies" that are all working on a broad array of aid and investment policies and projects for Africa and that they are not particularly well coordinated.

Christensen said U.S. aid packages to Africa -- such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the President's Malaria Initiative -- have grown very quickly this past decade.

In his comments, Swan reminded lawmakers that China's engagement with Africa is not new and that it initiated bilateral assistance to Africa in 1956. Swan reiterated that the aid China gives Africa annually is "significantly overshadowed" by the more than \$30 billion in assistance given by the United States, EU and multilateral institutions.

That said, he acknowledged, "there is no question that China's economic and commercial engagement

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Security Council to Discuss Detention of Diplomats in Zimbabwe

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington -- The bad behavior of the Zimbabwean government, including its recent abuse of diplomats, has prompted the United States to seek U.N. action.

The Bush administration said June 5 that the detention of American and British diplomats by Zimbabwean forces, and the beating of a U.S. Embassy driver is "absolutely outrageous behavior," and said that along with protests to President Robert Mugabe's government in Harare and at the U.N. Conference on Food Security in Rome, the United States is raising the issue with the U.N. Security Council.

"The police put up a roadblock, stopped the vehicles, slashed the tires, reached in and grabbed the telephones from my personnel," McGee told CNN June 5.

"The war veterans threatened to burn the vehicles with my people inside unless they got out of the

"[A]ny pretense that the Zimbabweans were surprised by this, I think, is really just a diversion on the part of the Zimbabweans," he said. But despite the U.S. outrage, "it is really nothing compared to what the Zimbabwean people suffer on a daily basis."



Zimbabwe main opposition for Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party supporters welcoming their leader Morgan Tsvangirai and his new election campaign tour bus at the party headquarters in Harare, June 11, 2008. (Philimon Bulawayo/Reuters)

McCormack said the tactic of interfering with diplomatic travel is not new, recalling the detention of Ambassador McGee and other diplomats in May. "They're just taking it to new levels, I guess you could say."

U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL NOT YET ENGAGED ON ZIMBABWE

The United States is raising the incident with the U.N. Security Council June 5 to register its "deep concern, unhappiness and distress," and to discuss the Mugabe government's behavior toward its people and its political opposition.

The incident, which occurred 40 kilometers outside Harare, was "not a random occurrence," and "is an example of the fact that this government doesn't know any bounds. It flouted all international convention, as well as the protections accorded to diplomats accredited to their country," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack.

The U.S. ambassador to Zimbabwe, James McGee, said the convoy of two U.S. Embassy vehicles and a British Embassy vehicle was stopped by a group of 40 armed people at a police roadblock while on the way to check on reports of recent violence. The armed group included members of the Zimbabwean army, as well as intelligence and retired military personnel.

vehicles and accompanied the police to a station nearby," he said.

McCormack added that the driver of one of the U.S. vehicles was beaten by the crowd, and that the incident "is a taste of the kind of oppression and violence that this government is willing to use against its own people."

The spokesman said the embassy vehicles had been clearly marked and that Zimbabwe's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been informed in advance of the trip. He added that Zimbabwe's claim that vehicles are restricted to a 40 kilometer travel limit is "apparently ... fictitious," and that Zimbabwe's diplomats in the United States are free to travel wherever they wish.

McCormack acknowledged that the issue of Zimbabwe "has previously not been a subject ... that has gotten very far in terms of Security Council discussions," but the Bush administration hopes to "highlight the fact that the international system is watching events in Zimbabwe and that the actions by the Mugabe government will not go unremarked." U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Zalmay Khalilzad said June 5 that consultations had been proposed for later that day to discuss the treatment of the diplomats. "We will hope that the council can join us in expressing outrage in terms of what has happened," he said. ♦

Lost Boys of Sudan Go to College in America

By Burton Bollag
Special Correspondent

Washington -- On January 6, dozens of tall, lanky young men originally from Sudan gathered at Harry S. Truman College in Chicago to celebrate their birthdays. They weren't really all born around the same day. They are refugees who had fled a brutal civil war in southern Sudan as unaccompanied children. Resettled in the United States and struggling to get an education, they don't know their real birthdays.

The young men are some of the "Lost Boys of Sudan," named for Peter Pan's young band in the fictional account by J.M. Barrie. These real Lost Boys got separated from families and went through a cruel adventure of almost biblical proportions before some 3,800 found refuge in the United States. Despite living through trauma and their continued struggle to earn a living and go to college, most of them have done remarkably well in their new country.

In the late 1980s, amidst a long-running civil war between Sudan's Arab-dominated government and the rebels in the ethnically African southern part of the country, an estimated 20,000 boys fled villages to avoid being killed by government forces or pressed into rebel militias.

In groups, these children walked for hundreds of kilometers across parched plains to the safety of camps in neighboring Ethiopia. Many died of hunger and thirst; some reportedly fell prey to lions. In 1991, a new government in Ethiopia pushed the boys back into Sudan. For a second time, they crossed Ethiopia's swollen Gilo



David Bol, a Lost Boy of Sudan refugee, works at a Job Corps Center in Moses Lake, Washington.

River. During that crossing, many younger boys drowned, and some were eaten by crocodiles. After 14 more months of hardship and wandering, the surviving 10,000 boys arrived at the United Nations-run Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.

Starting in 2000, some 3,800 of them were accepted for resettlement in the United States. They were spread among towns and cities across the country, where local groups of volunteers helped them settle into a new life unimaginably different from what they had known.

In 1987, John Kuol was 10 years old and watched government planes bomb his hometown of Bor, Sudan, while he was out grazing cattle. He

fled with many other boys. In 2001, he left the Kakuma refugee camp and flew to America. It was a bewildering transition. There was an unimaginable abundance of food here.

"In the camp, we ate once a day," said Kuol. "Here, there was lots of food, and we got stomach aches. I was offered hot dogs, and I thought -- 'I won't eat dog meat!'"

He settled in Chicago with the help of a church-affiliated refugee agency and experienced weather colder than he had ever imagined. He got an apartment with several other Lost Boys and couldn't understand how neighbors could pass each other without saying hello.

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Lost Boys of Sudan Go to College in America . . .

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Like his fellow refugees, Kuol took a low-paying job -- he worked as a security guard -- to pay rent. (Only 10 percent of the refugees were younger than 18; they were placed in local families and sent to local schools. They received more support than their older comrades.) Kuol, like many of the others, attended a community college in the evenings, starting with classes to improve the English he had learned in the camp. Kuol, who heads an association of Lost Boys in Chicago, now is enrolled in a four-year accounting course at Northeastern Illinois University and plans to graduate in 2009.

"They're much more serious than your average teenager," said John Trifiletti, who heads computer sciences at a campus of Florida Community College at Jacksonville.

The Lost Boys in Jacksonville and elsewhere benefit from some schol-

arships. But almost all work full time to cover living expenses. Supporters say it is not uncommon for them to start and stop their studies due to financial hardships.

Trifiletti said half of the 150 Lost Boys who settled in Jacksonville have started college. The five who graduated from his two-year institution in 2007 finished with honors. "They all slowly work toward their goals, and they help each other," he said.

Since being in the United States, and especially after a peace agreement in southern Sudan three years ago, many Lost Boys have re-established contact with family members. Some have visited their homeland, marrying there or helping establish schools. Most, however, want to continue living in the United States.

Observers are struck by the resilience of the young men. "Anyone who had lived through such experiences -- you'd expect them to have

serious health problems, both physical and psychological," said Dr. Paul. L. Geltman, a professor of pediatrics at Boston University. He published a study of the 304 Lost Boys who were younger than 18 when they arrived.

Geltman found that a surprisingly small portion of the boys -- 20 percent -- suffered from anxiety or nightmares, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. He said that, as a whole, the Lost Boys are "survivors" who have benefited from the community support they have received.

"We have to expect that refugees will come to the United States with lots of physical and emotional health problems. If we put them in the right environment, with lots of support services, they'll do well," he said.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

A Better Africa for Africans Is Goal of U.S. Policy . . .

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in Africa has increased dramatically and diversified in the last several years."

China is now Africa's second-largest trading partner after the United States, he said, and Africa is becoming an increasingly important export market for Chinese consumer goods. Swan said it is the Africans themselves who largely will shape the relationship with China. Swan outlined areas where greater cooperation with China

would be welcome, like partnering in post-conflict security-sector reform in Africa.

Focusing on Sudan, he said, the U.S. dialogue with China on Darfur continues and is "now producing results." Swan said the United States has welcomed positive trends in Chinese behavior with regard to Darfur and Sudan and said the United States has told them "frankly, we think they could do a lot more."

Additionally, he said, the United

States has encouraged China to reconsider its close military relationships with repressive military regimes in Africa, which harms China's public profile. He said there also may be some additional opportunities for cooperation in non-security sectors in Africa, such as health and agriculture. Web site.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Says New Technology Boosts Crop Yields

By Kathryn McConnell
Staff Writer

Washington -- New technologies can help the development of crops that produce significantly higher yields and crops more adaptable to climate change, the top U.S. agriculture official said.

Speaking June 3 at a United Nations meeting of world leaders called to discuss the global food crisis, Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer urged more investment in support of scientists and research institutions, reversing a several-year trend of reduced agricultural research funding. He also called for more access to rural credit so farmers can benefit from new technologies.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) plans to invest \$150 million in new agricultural development programs with the goal of doubling food production and food trade by 2013 in countries "with the potential to become major producers in their regions," Schafer said in Rome.

By promoting new technologies, including biotechnology, and improving market information systems, distribution networks and storage facilities, countries also can improve rural economies, he said.

At a separate June 3 discussion on the benefits of biotechnology, USAID Administrator Henrietta Fore said biotechnology-based crops currently are being grown in more than

20 countries, including India, China and South Africa.

Discussion panelists from Bangladesh, Burkina Faso and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization said biotechnology also can be used in fisheries farming. The Philippines, for instance, has used biotechnol-



US Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer answers questions during a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) press conference at the United Nations in Rome June 2. (AFP/File/Christophe Simon)

ogy to develop a disease-resistant type of shrimp, they said.

BIOTECHNOLOGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Biotechnology can help countries adapt to climate change, according to Schafer. The United States is leading an international effort to build an enhanced agricultural monitoring and famine early warning system, Schafer said. (See "Famine Early Warning System Can Predict Food Shortages." ([\[english/2008/June/200806051439391cnirellep0.3383295.html?CP.rss=true\]\(http://english/2008/June/200806051439391cnirellep0.3383295.html?CP.rss=true\) \)](http://www.america.gov/st/space-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Since the late 1990s, Schafer said, use of new technologies in the United States has resulted in historic increases in maize yields. Modern technology use in the United States also has resulted in a 29 percent reduction in herbicide usage and an 81 percent reduction in insecticide usage.

Schafer said all countries should abide by global trading rules agreed to through the World Trade Organization and support science-based evaluation and regulations to ensure that safe and effective technologies are available to researchers and farmers around the world.

He said the effort to solve the world food crisis must be a global one. The United States, the world's largest food-aid donor, will continue to coordinate aid efforts with United Nations agencies,

other major donor countries and international institutions, he said.

The text of Schafer's prepared remarks (http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_10B?contentidonly=true&contentid=2008/06/0144.xml) is available on USDA's Web site.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

U.S. Supports Ambitious U.N. Plan to Combat Global Food Crisis

By Kathryn McConnell
Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States has joined 180 other countries in agreeing to an ambitious plan to combat the global food crisis and to ensure future food security through investments in science and technology.

The United States welcomed the plan's recognition of the important "challenges and opportunities" related to biofuels, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer said June 5 at the conclusion of a three-day United Nations world food summit in Rome.

He said the United States is committed to the "sustainable" production and use of biofuels. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines sustainability as applying appropriate technology in ways that meet economic, environmental and social needs without compromising resources. Schafer led the U.S. delegation at the meeting.

The U.N. plan calls for more international private-public discussion of biofuels, taking into account the need to achieve and maintain global food security, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said June 6. The FAO hosted the meeting.

Several representatives at the meeting expressed interest in finding ways to support biofuel production so their countries can become energy independent, Schaffer said in a conference call with reporters.

In addition to working with the international community to provide aid to those most vulnerable to hunger, the United States will target aid

to helping countries boost food production so they can meet their own future needs, Schafer said.

That will involve teaching countries

approximately \$150 million in 2008 to help countries improve their infrastructure, including roads needed to carry farm products to market and refrigeration needed to prevent



*A woman harvests wheat in Jammu, India, Thursday, April 24, 2008.
(AP Photo/Channi Anand)*

how to increase yields by using such farming methods as site-specific applications of agricultural chemicals and irrigation in ways that are cost-effective and that minimize environmental damage.

During discussions at the meeting, representatives of some countries said they are re-evaluating their "resistance" to the use of biotechnology to help boost production dramatically, Shafer said.

Also at the meeting, representatives discussed the need for more investment in infrastructure development, and some pledged to put more money into that area, according to Schafer.

The United States plans to spend

harvest spoilage, he said.

The United States also agreed with the plan's call to continue efforts to liberalize agricultural trade by reducing or eliminating trade barriers, Schafer said.

ZIMBABWE URGED TO LIFT SUSPENSION OF AID GROUPS

While also representing the United States at the meeting, Henrietta Fore, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), used the opportunity to call on Zimbabwe to lift its suspension of international nongovernmental groups from doing humanitarian work in the country. ♦

Clinton Concedes, Encourages Supporters to Back Obama

By Michelle Austein
Staff Writer

Washington -- New York Senator Hillary Clinton ended her campaign to become the first female U.S. president June 7, saying she fully supports her Democratic opponent Barack Obama.

In a speech in Washington, Clinton thanked her supporters and encouraged them to support Illinois Senator Obama, who has enough delegates to be his party's presumed presidential nominee.



In a speech in Washington on June 7, Hillary Clinton encourages supporters to back Barack Obama. (AFP/Getty Images/Mark Wilson)

"Now, when I started this race, I intended to win back the White House and make sure we have a president who puts our country back on the path to peace, prosperity and progress. And that's exactly what we're going to do by ensuring that Barack Obama walks through the doors of the Oval Office on January 20th, 2009," Clinton said.

"I ask all of you to join me in working as hard for Barack Obama as you have for me," Clinton said. "The way to continue our fight now to accomplish the goals for which we stand is to take our energy, our passion, our strength, and do all we can to help elect Barack Obama the next president of the United States."

Clinton discussed the significance of being the United States' first viable female candidate for president. "Think how much progress we've already made. When we first started, people everywhere asked the same questions. Could a

woman really serve as commander in chief?" Clinton said. "And although we weren't able to shatter that highest, hardest glass ceiling this time, thanks to you, it's got about 18 million cracks in it."

"You can be so proud that from now on it will be unremarkable for a woman to win primary state victories, unremarkable to have a woman in a close race to be our nominee, unremarkable to think that a woman can be the president of the United States." She also cited the 2008 race's significance as the first to produce a major party nomination of an African-American presidential candidate.

In the wake of the final state nominating contests June 3, Obama claimed victory in the race for the Democratic nomination, but also lauded Clinton on her campaign, saying, "Our party and our country are better off because of her, and I am a better candidate for having had the honor to compete with

Hillary Rodham Clinton."

Neither Democratic candidate has earned enough pledged delegates to guarantee the nomination, but Obama is the presumed Democratic nominee because enough superdelegates -- party leaders who cast votes -- have indicated they will vote for Obama at the Democratic National Convention in Denver this August to give him more than the 2,118 votes needed to earn the nomination. (See "Presidential Campaign Enters New Phase as Primaries End (<http://www.america.gov/st/elections08-english/2008/June/20080604101050hmnietua0.5892603.html?CP.rss=true>).")

GENERAL ELECTION BEGINS WITH BATTLE OVER CHANGE

With the primaries behind them, presumed Democratic nominee Barack Obama and presumed Republican nominee John McCain now are focusing their efforts on convincing the American people that each is the better choice for president.

When it comes to their political backgrounds and personal style, the two presidential candidates are quite different. Arizona Senator McCain, who if elected would be the oldest U.S. president when taking office, has a 25-year congressional career and has been called a "maverick" for his willingness to go against his own party for causes in which he believes. Obama, 25 years younger than McCain, is serv-

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ing his first term in the U.S. Senate but already has gained broad support from voters in both political parties -- many of whom show up in large numbers to hear the Illinois senator speak. Judging by the speeches both candidates gave June 3, the night many Americans believe the general election began, "change" will likely be a word both McCain and Obama will mention again and again on the campaign trail.

"Change we can believe in" is a campaign slogan Obama and his supporters have used frequently in the past few months and signs with that message are often seen at the Democratic candidate's rallies.

In his speech in St. Paul, Minnesota, Obama defined change as "a foreign policy that doesn't begin and end with a war that should've never been authorized. ... Change is realizing that meeting today's threats requires not just our firepower, but the power of our diplomacy."

Obama said McCain's support of the Bush administration's troops surge in Iraq shows the Arizona senator will not bring change.

"While John McCain can legitimately tout moments of independ-

ence from his party in the past, such independence has not been the hallmark of his presidential campaign. ... It's not change when John McCain decided to stand with George Bush 95 percent of the time, as he did in the Senate last year."



Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Senator Barack Obama greets supporters on stage during a campaign rally in Bristow, Virginia June 5, 2008. (Jason Reed/Reuters)

In his speech in Kenner, Louisiana, McCain rejected Obama's claims. "Why does Senator Obama believe it's so important to repeat that idea over and over again? Because he knows it's very difficult to get Americans to believe something they know is false," McCain said.

McCain said he shared Obama's view that "this is indeed a change election. No matter who wins this election, the direction of this country is going to change dramatically."

"But, the choice is between the

right change and the wrong change, between going forward and going backward," the Republican candidate said.

Discussing the importance of restructuring the U.S. military, improving law enforcement agencies, strengthening alliances and improving capabilities for responding to disasters, McCain said, "The wrong change looks not to the future but to the past for solutions that have failed us before and will surely fail us again."

"I have a few years on my opponent, so I am surprised that a young man has bought into so many failed ideas," McCain said. McCain accused Obama of supporting unnecessary government programs that would use up resources and restrict Americans' choices.

The candidates will get to address each other in debates in the fall, and possibly even sooner. McCain has proposed the candidates meet for a series of town hall meetings, to be held between now and the national conventions. Obama's campaign says it is open to such an idea, but no final decision has been made.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Political Pundits, Parties Closely Following New Mexico Politics

By Michelle Austein
Staff Writer

Washington -- As the final Democratic presidential primary ballots were cast June 3, many Americans were watching to see the results of the Montana and South Dakota contests. But political junkies also had their eyes on another race -- New Mexico's congressional primaries.

Experts and pundits trying to predict how the Republican and Democratic parties will do in the

battle for control of Congress are following closely political developments in the state often nicknamed "the land of enchantment." With a New Mexico seat in the U.S. Senate seat becoming open -- meaning no incumbent on the ballot -- for the first time in more than 35 years, all three New Mexico congressional representatives decided to try to win it.

Because they had to forgo running for re-election to the House of Representatives to seek the Senate seat, New Mexico will get not only a new senator in January, but an entire new set of representatives.

LAST-MINUTE INTERVENTION TOO LATE FOR SENATE CANDIDATE

When New Mexico Senator Pete Domenici announced last fall that he would be retiring due to health reasons, the Democratic Party saw a prime opportunity to win another Senate seat. The state's lone Democratic representative, Tom Udall, will be the party's nominee, having run unopposed. He currently is favored in polls.

Republican congressional representatives Heather Wilson and Steve Pearce fought for their party's



Senate candidates and current House of Representatives members Heather Wilson, left, and Steve Pearce debate May 27.

debate, Pearce said Wilson was a waffler who "tends to take both sides of an issue" while she accused Pearce of trying either to "deceive yourself or trying to deceive the people."

The Republican candidates spent about \$4 million on their campaigns, much of it on television advertisements. Pearce stressed to Republicans that he is more conservative than his opponent and shares more of their values. Wilson emphasized her ability to run a winning campaign. Currently, the New Mexico 1st Congressional District representative, Wilson has won some of the most competitive elections in the United States.

As primary election day neared, New Mexicans were eager to see what Domenici had to say about the race. It seemed they would not

hear much -- Domenici said he had decided not to endorse a candidate. To some this was a surprise, as Domenici has been known as a mentor to Wilson. Among political experts, there was speculation that Domenici was reluctant to endorse a loser, because Wilson was trailing in the polls.

But with just four days until the primary, Domenici seemed to have a change of heart. "Heather Wilson is the brightest member of Congress I know and I hope she wins," he said in a statement. "I do want to tell all New Mexicans ... that I have the utmost confidence in her abilities to serve New Mexicans and Americans."

Political experts wondered if his endorsement would help swing undecided voters to Wilson. His endorsement might



Senator Pete Domenici's impending retirement sparks excitement in New Mexico, where well-known politicians now vie for his job.

endorsement might have been too late. Wilson, who is used to being in extremely close elections, found this one was no exception, but this time, she was on the losing end. Pearce won by about 3,000 votes.

The victorious Republican now faces a big challenge. After having run a primary campaign touting

his conservative beliefs, he now must convince New Mexico Democrats and Independents that he shares some of their views as well.

(Continued on page 23)

Bush Sees European Trip as Vital to Continuing Global Commitments

By Merle D. Kellerhals, Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington -- President Bush sees his final visit to Europe as a time to thank allies that have stood with the United States in Afghanistan and in Iraq during some of the most turbulent times of his presidency, but also as an opportunity to foster renewed commitment to vital issues affecting everyone.

"The countries I'm going to have committed troops to Afghanistan, and, of course, [I] want to thank them, and remind them there's a lot of work to be done," Bush said before leaving Washington June 9 for Ljubljana, Slovenia, and the U.S.-European Union Summit, which is being held outside Ljubljana in Brdo.

"I think working together in Afghanistan is going to be an historic achievement; helping a young democracy recover from a society in which women, for example, were treated as unbelievably second-class citizens," he said.

For that reason, Bush intends to make support for Afghanistan a significant issue at the June 10 U.S.-EU Summit and at the International Support Conference for Afghanistan in Paris later in the week. He said a recent visit to Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, by first lady Laura Bush offered him additional insight into the country's needs.

"She's going to go to the Paris Conference, along with Secretary [of State Condoleezza] Rice, on our behalf to ask nations to contribute to the development of Afghanistan, which will mean they'll be contributing to peace," Bush said in a recent interview.



US First Lady Laura Bush (L) and Afghan President Hamid Karzai (R) arrive for a press conference at The Presidential Palace in Kabul. (AFP/Shah Marai)

Afghanistan also is difficult because it is a new democracy emerging from a brutal regime that did little to improve the lives or livelihoods of the Afghan people, the president said. In 2007, remnants of the ousted Taliban regime threatened an offensive to retake control, but the U.S.-led coalition took the initiative with its own offensive and made progress in improving the overall security of the country, he said.

"The best progress, though, is the advance of better-trained police forces -- and I thank the Italian government for helping -- as well as a better Afghan army, which over time needs to provide the security for the country," Bush said during an interview.

In addition to the U.S.-EU Summit in Brdo, Bush also will hold bilateral meetings in Berlin, Rome, the Vatican, Paris, London and Northern Ireland, says National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley. While in Europe, Bush will commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of post-World War II Europe and the Berlin airlift, which helped resolve a serious crisis of the early Cold War during the multinational occupation of Germany following the war.

The trip includes a meeting with Pope Benedict XVI at the restored medieval St. John's Tower, situated on a hilltop inside the Vatican gardens.

The meeting is unusual because popes normally receive heads of state in their private study in the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican, spokesman Federico Lombardi told news agencies.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

United States Does Not Seek Permanent Bases in Iraq

By David McKeeby
Staff Writer

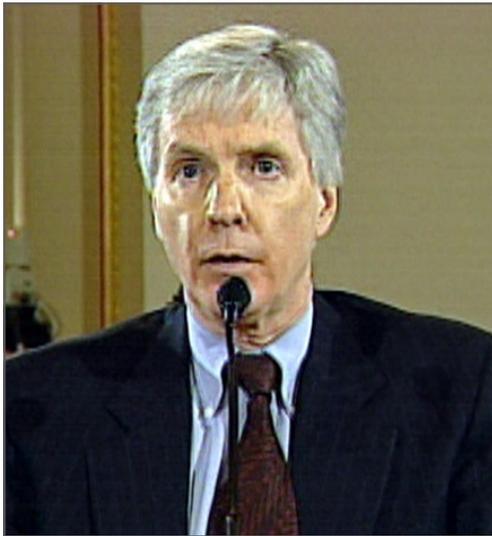
Washington -- The United States is not seeking to build permanent military bases in Iraq under a new agreement currently being negotiated between the two governments. "There isn't going to be an agreement that infringes on Iraq's sovereignty," U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker says.

"Iraq mid-2008 is a very different Iraq in terms of its capabilities than Iraq a year ago. And I expect that Iraq 2009 will be far further advanced," Crocker says. The Iraqi people are not going to accept any agreement that jeopardizes the nation's hard-won sovereignty, and the United States would not want it either, he said.

Since 2003, U.S.-led coalition forces have operated in Iraq under a U.N. Security Council resolution which expires at the end of 2008. In stepping out from under the U.N.'s protective umbrella by seeking a new arrangement with coalition forces to continue operating in the country -- known as a "status of forces agreement" -- Iraq seeks to take another step forward, Crocker said at a June 5 briefing at the State Department.

"In terms of U.S. and coalition military presence, clearly there is going to be a need for that beyond the end of the year," Crocker said. "The more Iraqis are able to do in terms of their own security, the less requirement there is for outside support. That's what Iraqis want, and that's what we want."

But while the United States has concluded similar agreements with 78 other countries, including Ger-



Ryan Crocker, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq

many, Japan, and several of Iraq's Gulf neighbors, America's commitment to supporting the Iraqi people as they build a democracy will make it more than a military-to-military relationship.

"We also intend for [the status of forces agreement] to set the broad parameters of the overall bilateral relationship in every field: political, diplomatic, economic, cultural, the whole totality of the relationship," Crocker said.

Crocker categorically dismissed media reports that the agreement was geared toward a long-term U.S. military occupation of Iraq or seizing control of its airspace. "There aren't going to be secret provisions, attachments, protocols or whatever," adding, "We are not seeking permanent military bases in Iraq. That is just flatly untrue."

U.S. and Iraqi officials hope to complete negotiations by the end of July, Crocker said, making transparency essential to the process for both sides ahead of review of the

agreement by Iraq's Council of Ministers.

"This agreement will be scrutinized by the Iraqi Parliament as well as Iraqi public opinion, and this therefore has to be a very straightforward process," Crocker said.

AGREEMENT REFLECTS IRAQI PROGRESS

Widespread debate on the status of forces agreement across the Iraqi political spectrum also shows how far Iraq has come in recent months, Crocker said.

When Sunnis living in Anbar province took back their communities from al-Qaida and joined Iraqi government forces and their coalition allies in the spring of 2007, Crocker said, members of Iraq's Shi'a community began questioning their reliance on Shi'a-based militias, such as the Mahdi Army, which froze its operations after its attempted seizure of religious shrines killed 50 Iraqis and produced a significant backlash against the militants, as well as their sponsors in neighboring Iran.

"One would hope that that will lead to a rethinking in Iran as to what its long-term policy toward Iraq should be: to support a democratically elected central government or to support militias that are aligned against that government," Crocker said, an issue likely to shape the agenda for Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's June 7 visit to Tehran.

The shift in public opinion in turn further changed the political climate, Crocker said, as reflected in a renewed effort toward political

(Continued on page 17)

71 Nations Join to Prevent Nuclear Terror Attack

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
Staff Writer

Washington -- The threat of nuclear terrorism is something many people avoid thinking about. But California Representative Adam Schiff, who created the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on Nuclear Security, says ignoring the problem will not make it disappear.

He supports ongoing efforts by world leaders to channel energy into imagining the direst scenario. Such leaders, of course, want to prevent a nuclear attack from coming to pass. But if they can't do that, they want to be prepared to respond.

At a meeting in Madrid, Spain, representatives of 71 countries will consider the practical questions that can keep officials awake at night:

How would terrorists acquire materials to make a nuclear explosive device?

How would they build a weapon and move it to a target?

What target would they select?

What attack scenario is most realistic?

Officials realize that private companies and local governments are likely to be on the front line if a deadly nuclear scenario plays out.

Acting Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Rood told America.gov that the private sector "can make a real and meaningful contribution" in prevention, interdiction and mitigation.

During a recent interview, Rood said port and airport employees already are expert at screening cargo and have insights to share.

He also said the first responders to a nuclear detonation at an airport likely would be fire and rescue personnel employed by the state or by a privately owned airfield.

If a nuclear device exploded in a subway or at a sports event, local municipalities and private firms would be involved, as they would be in an explosion at a port.

Whatever the circumstance, Rood said, it will be important for local entities and private companies to interact among themselves and with federal and international authorities.

Rood also said it is important to reach out to nuclear industry experts for new ideas, especially relating to nuclear detection since there is as yet no existing global network of sensors.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE SECTOR NEW FOCUS FOR INITIATIVE

The Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism increasingly will seek to bring these groups into direct contact with the voluntary multilateral partnership. The initiative was launched in 2006 by U.S. President George Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin in St. Petersburg, Russia.

The first three meetings were held in Morocco, Turkey and Kazakhstan. They were held, in part, to strengthen nations' laws and legal frameworks to ensure that nuclear terrorists are prosecuted and pun-

ished.

There are now 71 nations publicly committed to the initiative's principles:

Develop and improve accounting, control and physical protection of nuclear materials.

Enhance security for civilian nuclear facilities.

Research and develop national detection capabilities that work with other nations.

Improve capabilities to search, confiscate and keep nuclear materials under safe control.

Deny safe haven and financial resources to those who would facilitate acts of nuclear terrorism.

Ensure adequate civil and criminal laws to deter nuclear terrorists.

Improve information sharing among participants while protecting confidential sources.

Improve capabilities to investigate and respond to a nuclear incident.

In the United States, institutions such as the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Energy are involved, as are the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Coast Guard.

Counterpart organizations in other countries also are focused on the initiative mission that Rood described -- detecting, interdicting and preventing an attack, and being ready to respond should one occur.

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Famine Early Warning System Can Predict Food Shortages

By Cheryl Pellerin
Staff Writer

This article is the first in a series on FEWS NET, the U.S. Agency for International Development's famine early warning system network.

Washington -- Since 1985, when scientists first used satellites to produce continental-scale images of vegetation and crops across Africa, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has funded an effort that warns nations and regions months in advance of serious impending food shortages.

USAID established the famine early warning system (FEWS) to help prevent or respond to famine conditions in sub-Saharan Africa by giving decision makers specific information about drought conditions or dwindling crop yields based on satellite remote-sensing data.

Satellite sensors acquire images of the Earth and transmit the data to ground receiving stations worldwide. Once the raw images are processed, analysts can document changing environmental conditions like pollution, global climate change, natural resource distribution and urban growth.

In this effort, USAID partners with NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the United States, and collaborates with international, regional and national partners. Chemonix International, a global

development firm, implements the program for USAID.

In 2000, the FEWS Network (FEWS NET) was formed to establish more effective, sustainable, African-led food security and partnerships to reduce the vulnerability of at-risk groups to famine and floods.

"At the beginning, it was primarily remote sensing," Gary Eilerts, USAID program manager for FEWS



NET, told America.gov. "It was pretty much looking at rainfall and vegetation and trying to say what we thought was happening in terms of food security."

IMAGERY AND MARKETS

Today, he said, the program has 23 offices around the world where analysts combine maps, data and imagery with knowledge of local markets and trade in each country, and information about local livelihoods, to determine what food the market can buy locally, what it can bring in and what people can afford.

"Food security is a very complex phenomenon," geographer Molly Brown, who works for the Biospherics Sciences Branch at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Cen-

ter in Maryland, told America.gov. "Just because you have green stuff on the ground doesn't mean you're producing anything in the way of food."

USAID spent \$14.9 million on FEWS NET activities in 2007, funding operations in 17 African nations; regional offices in Burkina Faso, Kenya and South Africa; and country offices in Afghanistan, Haiti and Guatemala.

In the field offices, analysts study satellite imagery, local livelihoods, food security and vulnerability, markets and trade, early warning systems and agricultural economics. They also plan contingencies for and responses to food issues.

The USGS employs regional scientists for Central America, East Africa, West Africa and Southern Africa who support FEWS NET activities and strengthen the technical capacity of regional and national institutions.

FEWS NET gets its warnings out through a mix of products that are printed and posted online, Charles Chopak, Chemonix's chief of party for FEWS NET activities, told America.gov.

These include monthly food-security updates for the 23 countries and three regional offices that are targeted to technical readers in ministries of agriculture, finance and social welfare. Regular food-security outlooks -- maps updated semi-annually -- show projected food insecurity for a country.

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Famine Early Warning System Can Predict Food Shortages . . .

(Continued from page 16)

"When a situation is emerging or evolving," Chopak said, "we put out a one-page food-security alert that describes what's causing the issue and what the impact will be on food security."

In a typical year, FEWS NET analysts might be able to give warnings five months to six months in advance of a food problem. In a bad year, they might be able to give a one- to two-month warning.

Anyone can sign up for e-mail alerts on the FEWS NET Web site. Audiences for the warnings include local governments, U.N. agencies in FEWS NET countries, USAID missions and embassies, local and international nongovernmental organizations and food-security consultants.

FOOD CRISIS

The average price of rice worldwide has more than tripled since early 2006 and wheat, corn and soybean prices have more than doubled, triggering food riots and threatening to plunge more than 100 million peo-



ple into deeper hunger and poverty. The causes of the crisis vary, but the result in many places is famine.

The evolving and increasingly advanced work of FEWS NET becomes even more critical during such a crisis, Eilerts said.

"I spend about 80 percent of my time now dealing with that crisis," he added. "It's much more important to know what [food] is [available in countries] and what is not. And it's much more important to be able to follow the changes over time because this problem will be with us for several more years, if not 10 more years."

"We're developing a series of products specifically to respond to peo-

ple at various [technical] levels who want to monitor and take action on rising prices," Chopak said.

One product will compare the main staple food of the poor in each country with a likely substitute and try to understand the relative price changes of each. Another product will examine a series of

price changes in a region and explain the food-security effect of the change.

FEWS NET is adding to its monthly reports in each country an urban assessment and vulnerability section that discusses food-security issues in urban areas, which may be more vulnerable to food shortages than agricultural areas.

More information about FEWS NET (<http://www.fews.net/Pages/default.aspx>) is available at the USAID Web site.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

United States Does Not Seek Permanent Bases in Iraq . . .

(Continued from page 14)

compromise across sectarian lines in the Iraqi parliament, which passed a budget and landmark reform packages in early 2008.

"Lots to be done, but I think we've seen some pretty important progress. And it links and reinforces," Crocker said.

Further security improvements can be seen in recent gains by Iraqi security forces against militants in Baghdad, Basra and Mosul, Crocker said, which have further underlined the Iraqi government's commitment to governing across sectarian lines to its Sunni minority.

A transcript of Crocker's briefing (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/>

June/20080605155704eaifas0.5703089.html) is available on America.gov.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Satellite Imagery Drives U.S. Global Food Security Effort

By Cheryl Pellerin
Staff Writer

This article is the second in a two-part series on the U.S. Agency for International Development Famine Early Warning System network.

Washington -- Food security -- a state in which everyone has all the food they need for a healthy life -- is a simple concept with many variables. These variables include crop planting and yield, local livelihoods and markets and trade.

Measuring such elements is the increasingly technical job of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which in 1985, with four other U.S. agencies, established the Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) and in 2000 made it FEWS NET -- an extended network of international, regional and national partners.

Remote sensing of the Earth's surface from satellites revolutionized the study of the natural environment and made FEWS NET possible. The program combines continent-scale satellite imagery of rainfall and vegetation in Africa and other regions with socioeconomic data about food markets and local income sources. The information is used to warn nations and regions months in advance of impending food shortages.

"Production is one of the fundamental elements of food security," Gary Eilerts, USAID program manager for



In Kenya, Winrock's CIRCLE partner Dupoto-e-Maa (Dupoto) is working among agro-pastoralist communities in Kajiado district, south of Nairobi. The Kajiado region is prone to drought, and in Spring 2005 was the subject of a food security alert by USAID's Famine Early Warning Systems (FEWS) network.

FEWS NET, told America.gov, "and we have an ability to monitor the growth of a plant from space."

U.S. partners include NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Chemonix International, a global development firm, implements the program for USAID. (See "Famine Early Warning System Can Predict Food Shortages (<http://www.america.gov/st/space-english/2008/June/200806051439391cniirellep0.3383295.html?CP.rss=true>).")

USAID established the system to help prevent or respond to famine conditions in sub-Saharan Africa.

Now, FEWS NET has offices in 17 African nations; regional offices in Burkina Faso, Kenya and South Africa; and country offices in Afghanistan, Haiti and Guatemala.

EYES IN THE SKY

Satellite sensors acquire images of Earth and transmit the data to ground receiving stations worldwide. Once the raw images are processed and analyzed, scientists can document changing environmental conditions like pollution, global climate change, natural resource distribution, urban growth and more.

For FEWS NET, geographer Molly Brown, who works for the Bio-

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Satellite Imagery Drives U.S. Global Food Security Effort . . .

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spherics Sciences Branch at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, told America.gov, "satellite remote sensing is where it all begins."

In this work, NASA and NOAA contribute satellite imaging data, and USGS processes imagery for distribution to FEWS NET analysts.

Data about vegetation and rainfall come daily from sensors on NOAA's advanced very high resolution radiometer (AVHRR) satellite. One sensor produces the integrated spectral vegetation index, which measures reflected sunlight, or energy, directly from the plants. Another sensor measures rainfall.

Rainfall measurements also come from the Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission satellite -- a joint mission between NASA and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency -- and the Defense Meteorological Satellite Program Special Sensor Microwave/Imager.

Rainfall estimates are combined with ground measurements so analysts can "figure out how much rainfall has happened," Brown says, "and then FEWS NET takes those estimates and puts them through a model" that allows analysts to estimate a plant's ultimate yield based on factors like when it was planted during the growth season and how much rain it received.

"What we're trying to do now, Brown said, "is to multiply that yield effect due to rainfall by the actual amount of land in crop to get an estimate of how much food was either produced or is in deficit."

TECHNICAL DIPLOMACY

Over time, FEWS NET has employed an increasing number of country or regional residents to work in its offices as analysts. Today, all the employees are from the region where the office is located.

"There has been a progressive handing over of a lot of the remote sensing work," Eilerts said, "so our field people look at it as part of a product delivered to them from a local source. It's a NASA-NOAA product processed and sent out by USGS to local partners who have been trained to do this."

At Chemonix International, the global development firm that implements the program for USAID, Chief of Party Charles Chopak told America.gov that FEWS NET teaches local staff how to do assessments, use geographic information systems and deal with a range of technical issues required for early warnings.

"In a lot of ways, we don't have the resources to collect primary data," said Chopak, an agricultural economist, "so we go to the governments and say, 'Can we have your production data, your price data, what's going on with this,' and we're pulling from that. But what we give back is capacity building and stronger networks."

In some countries, FEWS NET has developed national vulnerability assessment committees chaired by a government official, which assess the country's vulnerability and food security situation after harvests.

"In countries where we don't have

solid networks, we don't get to consensus as quickly and there tends to be an argument about how to proceed," he added.

"In [one country] with a complex political environment, this year we were able to organize and help complete a harvest assessment that included government," Chopak said. "Even though it's a very difficult government" that did not want its land policies to appear to be failing, "the consensus production estimate showed that less than 30 percent of their needs were being met."

By keeping the work on a technical level, he added, "We're able as a group to leverage resources and expertise to get good work out."

FEWS NET, Eilerts said, "is working with people, working with the agencies around us, and that includes repressive governments, incapable governments, good governments, U.N. agencies and private voluntary organizations. We have a reputation for being open, transparent and collaborative."

More information about FEWS NET (<http://www.fews.net/Pages/default.aspx>) is available at the USAID Web site.

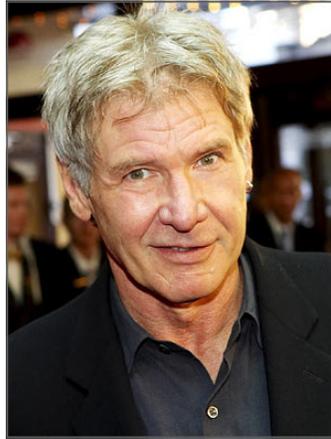
For more about remote sensing systems, see "U.S. Agencies Moving Forward in Planning Landsat 7 Successor" (<http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2007/April/200704091215171cniellep0.3143885.html>)."

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Actor Harrison Ford Speaks Out Against Wildlife Trafficking

By Lea Terhune
Staff Writer

Washington -- Hollywood, WildAid, the Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking (CAWT) and the U.S. government have joined forces to fight wildlife trafficking with three public service announcements featuring actor Harrison Ford. Actress Bo Derek and Assistant Secretary of State Claudia McMurray launched the clips at the United Nations in New York June 5, World Environment Day.



Actor Harrison Ford

Ford, best known for his screen characters Han Solo and Indiana Jones, donated his work to this campaign against wildlife trafficking.

"Never buy illegal wildlife products. When the buying stops, the killing can too," Ford says, surrounded by tourist souvenirs made from endangered animals. "It might look nothing like the animal itself but don't be fooled. An animal has been killed to make one of these."

"Thanks, anyway. Drop me a postcard instead," Ford says, as he tosses aside a snakeskin boot.

Animals are trafficked for ornaments, clothing accessories, exotic cuisine and live animals for pets, but most devastating to several species is their use in Chinese traditional medicine. The tiger and rhinoceros, especially, are being driven to extinction by this trade. Elephants, whose ivory tusks are prized for ornaments, are likewise threatened.

"A thin line separates a buyer from a killer," Ford says in one of the announcements.

Ford, a longtime environmental activist, is a vice-chairman of the board of Conservation International.

Derek also has championed the cause of endangered and abused animals, and has served as special envoy for the U.S. secretary of state on wildlife issues since 2006.

McMurray recently testified before Congress on the importance of stopping illegal trade in animals. "Wildlife trafficking is often linked to other forms of organized crime, including the smuggling of drugs, weapons and people," she said.

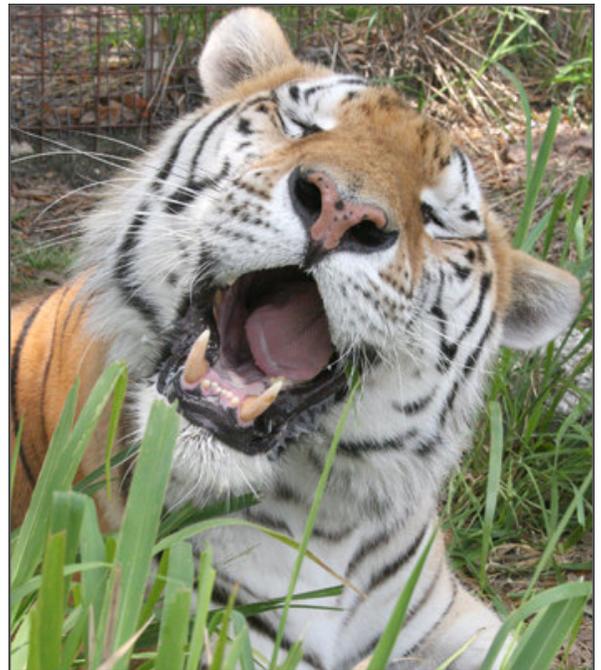
The U.S. State Department enlisted conservation organization WildAid and Ford in the effort to reach a global audience and raise consumers' awareness about the magnitude of criminal trafficking in wildlife. The announcements are being distributed via U.S. embassies worldwide.

Besides creating significant losses of precious plant and animal species, the illegal wildlife trade poses health hazards as animals infected with diseases such as avian influenza and Ebola virus are transported

around the world.

The global black market in wildlife and wildlife products is estimated to generate about \$10 billion annually, and much of it is organized by international crime syndicates, the same professional criminals who typically are involved in human trafficking and drug smuggling. This is one reason the United States has taken a hard line against the illegal wildlife trade and co-founded the CAWT in 2005.

Today, CAWT has 19 government and 13 international nongovernmental organization partners. The partnership works with international



anti-trafficking law enforcement and conservation organizations, and assisted the Association of Southeast Asia Nations to establish its wildlife enforcement network (ASEAN-WEN). ♦

Equality Raises Female Math Performance to That of Males

By Jeffrey Thomas
Staff Writer

Washington -- A new study refutes the conventional wisdom in education that, on average, boys do better in math and girls do better in reading for biological reasons. A new international study suggests that the gender gap in math varies according to national culture, with the gap disappearing entirely in countries that have approached rough equality between males and females.

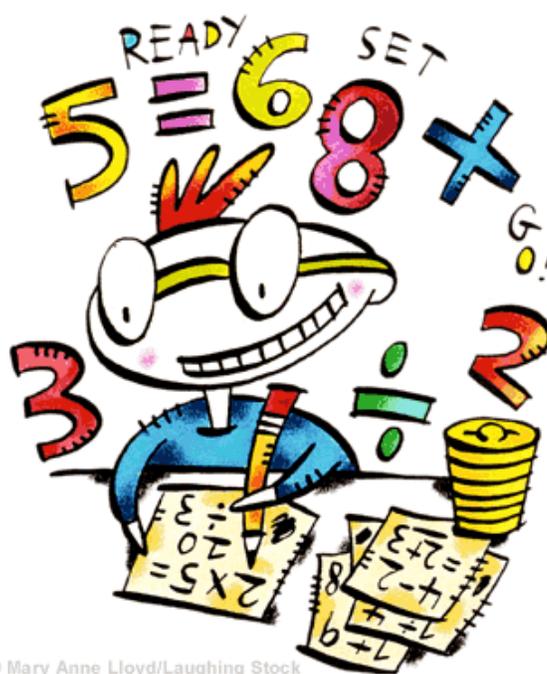
The study also found two other significant correlations: with increasing equality between the sexes, the number of girls performing at the very highest levels increases, and the gender gap in reading grows even larger in favor of girls.

The study appeared May 30 in the Education Forum of the journal *Science* and is the work of Luigi Guiso, Ferdinando Monte, Paola Sapienza, and Luigi Zingales. The authors, who say they contributed equally to the research, represent several institutions: the European University Institute in Florence, Italy (Guiso); the Economics Department at the University of Chicago in Illinois (Monte); the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois (Sapienza); and the Graduate School of Business at the University of Chicago (Zingales).

To measure performance differences in mathematics and reading, the study uses data from the 2003 Programme for International Stu-

dent Assessment (PISA). Students from 40 countries took identical tests designed to be free of cultural biases.

The PISA test revealed that in many countries, girls perform worse on average than boys in math, while in all countries girls perform better than boys in reading. In other words, if one looked no further, the



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conventional wisdom would appear to be true: boys are better at math, girls at reading.

But the researchers then used several measures of gender equality to classify countries, including the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index, the World Values Surveys, a measure of female economic activity and the political empowerment index developed by the World Economic Forum. To detect cultural attitudes toward women, for example, they looked at responses to such statements as "When jobs are scarce, men should

have more right to a job than women."

When the researchers compared results country by country, they found that the gender gap in math narrows or disappears in societies that display more gender equality according to the measures used. The top five are Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland and New Zealand.

No country has achieved full gender equality by the measures used. The United States ranks 31st in gender equality on the researchers' scale.

To make sure the correlation they found between equality and the math gender gap was not just a reflection of the low rates of poverty and relative income equality in the top-tier countries, the researchers used only the scores of the top 50 percent of students in terms of socio-economic status, Sapienza said in an e-mail interview with *America.gov*.

"We were worried about differential dropout rates between boys and girls in some countries," she said. "For example, in some societies it is possible that in poorer families either boys or girls are not attending schools because they work at home or outside the home. Dropout rates could affect the comparisons. It turned out that they don't. The results are the same if we drop the low socio-economic status students and if we do not drop them. But, the analysis presented on the paper is based on the reduced sample."

"The so-called gender gap in math seems to be linked to environmental

(Continued on page 22)

Equality Raises Female Math Performance to That of Males . . .

(Continued from page 21)

factors, which means it could be eliminated by education or social programs," Sapienza said. "The gap doesn't exist in countries in which men and women have access to similar resources and opportunities."

The authors note that their "findings shed some light on recent trends in girls' educational achievements in the United States, where the math gender gap has been closing over time."

In 2001, women in the United States earned 48 percent of the bachelor's degrees in mathematics, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

The new study constitutes good news for educators, although it also poses a challenge. If the gender gap or poor performance in mathematics in general was rooted in biology or poverty, there would not be the same urgency about addressing the problem that there will be if curricula changes can have an effect. Many educators have said, for example, that boys and girls seem to learn mathematics differently, especially geometry.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has been funding research on gender in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields since 1993. With an annual budget

varying from \$7 million to \$10 million, NSF has funded more than 350 grants for research on how to maintain girls' interest in science past middle school, how to bring more girls into elective high school math and advanced-placement science courses and how to increase young women's enrollment in STEM undergraduate studies, particularly in engineering and computer sciences.

For example, traditional math instruction in the classroom often assumes that learners will work alone and are best motivated by competition. But researchers funded by NSF at the University of Southern California have found that girls learn math best through collaborative activities and dialogue.

Boston College researchers are investigating fourth-graders' measurement ability, which is the ability that shows the strongest and most consistent gender and socioeconomic difference and plays a key role in success in STEM fields.

On August 9, 2007, President Bush signed into law the America COMPETES Act, which authorizes \$33.6 billion over fiscal years 2008-2010 for STEM education programs, including help for current and future teachers in the areas of science and math education.

In mathematics, U.S. students ranked 26th out of 40 countries on

the PISA test, with a below-average number of top performers and a significant gender gap.

The United States has played a leadership role in the pursuit of equal rights for women both in the 19th century and in the feminist movement that began in the 1960s. But progress in some areas has been more difficult to achieve than others. (See Diversity At Work (<http://amlife.america.gov/amlife/diversity/atwork.html>).)

"Some northern European countries have a lot of poor immigrants and they are educating them quite well even at the low end of the social distribution," Sapienza said. The weaker performance by U.S. girls on the PISA math test, she speculates, is rooted in curricula differences. "My suspicion is that especially the math curricula [in northern Europe] are stronger than the one typically adopted in the United States, especially in areas where there are disadvantaged children."

Indeed, improved curricula in both math and reading are likely to be increasingly critical for boys as well. "Our research indicates that in more gender-equal societies, girls will gain an absolute advantage relative to boys," Sapienza said.

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See also

<http://www.america.gov/>
Telling America's story

71 Nations Join to Prevent Nuclear Terror Attack. . .

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The Germans, for example, recently hosted a Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism workshop to help countries catalog the use of radiological materials for industrial purposes and to develop better regulations.

Rood will lead the U.S. delegation to the fourth Global Initiative meeting in Spain June 16-18 to review the initiative's progress. The Madrid meeting will have a special focus on nuclear detection and private-sector participation.

Spain also is scheduled to host a field exercise in the fall. Exercises are designed to test nations' abilities to work together, develop new concepts of operations and ensure that all participants are as prepared as possible to deal with the broad threat.

Success requires more than just en-

dorsing principles: There is a range of initiative activities to track and prevent terrorists from acquiring parts and resources.

The 71 countries are making it harder for terrorists searching for expertise and technology, according to Rood.

The initiative is off to a good start, and the United States anticipates working closely with like-minded states to expand the size and strength of the partnership so it is ready to deal with one of today's most challenging security issues.

For more information about U.S. policy, see the State Department's Web site on the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (<http://www.state.gov/t/isn/c18406.htm>).

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Political Pundits, Parties Closely Following New Mexico Politics . . .

(Continued from page 12)

NEW MEXICO 1ST LIKELY TO RECEIVE A LOT OF ATTENTION

Domenici's retirement brought an additional piece of good news for Democrats from Wilson's bid for his seat as she had to relinquish her House seat. As Washington Post political writers Chris Cillizza and Ben Pershing explain, the New Mexico 1st is "one of the swingiest districts in the country."

In a district that trends Democrat and supports Democratic presidential candidates, Wilson has amazed many by narrowly winning re-election year after year. The Democratic Party is hoping that with Wilson out of the race, this finally will be the year it takes the district for the first time since 1968. Party

officials seem eager to help out their candidate, former Albuquerque city councilman Martin Heinrich.

In an election year in which several other Republican congressional seats are vulnerable, the Republican Party seems willing to work hard to keep the New Mexico 1st. Its candidate, Bernalillo County Sheriff Darren White, has gotten some fundraising help from one of the best-known Republicans, President Bush. The president attended a \$1,000-per-ticket fundraiser that helped raise \$150,000 for White.

As the candidates for the New Mexico 1st seat begin to campaign against each other, outlining their visions for such goals as ending the war in Iraq and reducing high gas prices, local voters will not be

the only ones paying attention. With both parties feeling that much is at stake in this race, politicians from across the country also will be watching the Heinrich-White battle play out.

This article is part of America.gov's continuing coverage of seven of the 435 U.S. congressional districts during the 2008 campaign. Each offers a different prism through which to view U.S. politics. For more information, see U.S. Elections - State and Local (<http://uspolitics.america.gov/uspolitics/elections/stateandlocal.html>).

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