



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

Ambassador Joins CJTF-HOA Team to Promote Ethiopian Livestock Health

On May 14, U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia Donald Yamamoto visited a Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) veterinary civil action project (VETCAP) providing treatment and care to livestock at seven locations in Eastern Ethiopia. The Ambassador joined visiting U.S. military specialists and Ethiopian veterinarians at Jeldessa, an hour's drive outside of Dire Dawa. At the site, he worked with the team to vaccinate several animals, and greeted the community members who had gathered with their goats, sheep, cattle, donkeys and camels.



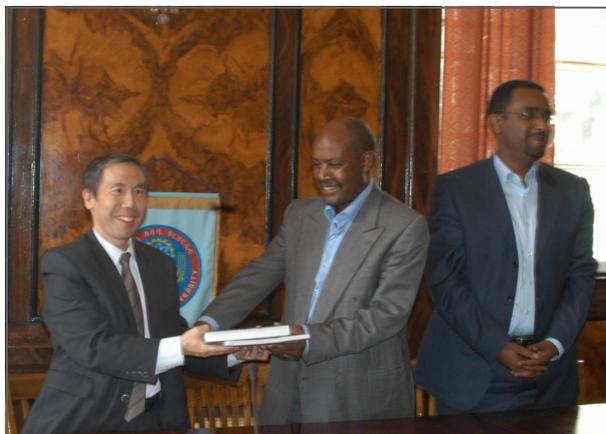
Ambassador Yamamoto and veterinarians vaccinating one of the animals.

During the nine-day VETCAP, CJTF-HOA's 13-member 354th Functional Specialty Team is working with Ethiopian veterinarians to vaccinate more

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Ambassador Delivers Hundreds of Books to Addis Ababa University Law Faculty

United States Ambassador to Ethiopia Donald Yamamoto presented more than 800 books to the Addis Ababa University (AAU) Faculty of Law on May 15, 2008. The book donation was organized by an Ethiopian Professor at Duquesne University Law School in Pennsylvania and transported by a U.S. military delegation visiting Addis Ababa earlier this year.



Ambassador Yamamoto hands over law books to Dr. Bute Gotu, Vice President of Academic Affairs at Addis Ababa University.

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Rewards for Justice Program for Rwanda Genocide Renewed by U.S.

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington -- In an effort to achieve lasting peace in Africa's Great Lakes region, the United States is renewing its efforts to bring to justice those alleged to have been responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda who are still at large by relaunching the Rewards for Justice war crimes program.

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer discussed the program May 12 at a special State Department briefing, where she was joined by Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues Clint Williamson.

Frazer called the Rewards for Justice program a "valuable tool that has complemented our efforts to end war in the Great Lakes region and to implement the Lusaka, Sun City and Pretoria peace processes."

"Through it, we received valuable information that led to the arrest of three dangerous fugitives," including "former government and militia leaders accused of genocide, complicit in genocide and in crimes against humanity: Tharcisse Renzaho, Jean-Baptiste Gatete and Yusuf John Munyakazi. These three are now in trial proceedings or awaiting trial." Thirteen more fugitives still are sought under the relaunched program.

In addition to facilitating the apprehension of fugitives wanted for their alleged involvement in the Rwandan genocide, Frazer said, the

Rewards for Justice program also has "showcased our commitment to justice and peace in the Great Lakes region.

"Since 2004, we have demonstrated U.S. commitment to prevent further conflict and support conflict resolution through the facilitation of the Tripartite Plus process, culminating with Secretary Rice's chairmanship of the Tripartite Plus Heads of State Summit in December that would include the presidents of Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and the foreign and defense ministers of the Democratic Republic of the Congo."

The Tripartite Plus was established by the United States to facilitate relations and build confidence among the four countries in the Great Lakes region.

During his recent visit to the region, Ambassador Williamson assessed the benefits of relaunching Rewards for Justice as an incentive to those who could help to locate the fugitives, Frazer said.

"As President Kabila has said, the time is now for the former Rwandan armed forces and Interahamwe in eastern Congo, who have caused so much insecurity, suffering and devastation, to lay down their arms peacefully and return to Rwanda, as outlined in the Nairobi communiqué," she said. The Interahamwe is the Hutu militia believed to have been largely responsible for the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

In separate remarks, Williamson reiterated that through the pro-

gram's relaunching, the State Department is renewing its efforts to bring to justice those most responsible for the 1994 genocide.

"I'm pleased to announce that the Office of War Crimes Issues will be working closely with the Bureau of African Affairs and the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa to launch a new Rewards for Justice campaign. This campaign aims to secure the arrests of the 13 men indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) for genocide and crimes against humanity who remain at large.

"As you know," he told reporters, "ethnic violence of the scale and horror that we witnessed in 1994 does not happen spontaneously. It requires extensive preparation and planning. Many of the architects behind the Rwandan genocide have been arrested, thanks to political and material support from a wide range of nations, including the United States. These arrests and the trials and convictions that have followed challenge the notion that those who direct crimes such as these can go unpunished."

Years later, however, 13 of those indicted remain at large, he said. "These men include Augustin Bizimana, Idelphonse Nizeyimana, Prottais Mpiranya, Gregoire Ndahimana, Ladislav Ntaganzwa and Felicien Kabuga. All of these individuals exercised positions of power and influence in the lead-up to and during the genocide itself. The impunity of these men 14 years after the crimes

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Ambassador Joins CJTF-HOA Team to Promote Ethiopian Livestock . . .

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than 20,000 animals. They are inoculating cattle against Blackleg and Anthrax, and inoculating sheep and goats against Contagious Caprine Pleuropneumonia (CCPP) and Peste de Petite Ruminant (PPR). Additionally, they are providing health exams and training on basic care and nutrition, and treating livestock for internal and external parasites. Following the inoculation drive, the U.S. military specialists will provide training on “small animal” surgical procedures at a Dire Dawa veterinary hospital.

The VETCAP, which will contribute to livestock health and the economic prosperity of citizens in Dire Dawa region, is one example of CJTF-HOA’s work with regional governments to protect common interests and enhance citizens’ safety and security. The mission of the task force is to conduct unified action with local military forces and government representatives in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region to prevent conflict, promote regional stability, and protect Coalition interests in order to prevail against extremism. The task force is headquartered in Djibouti, and includes a Country Coordination Element at the U.S. Mission to



VETCAP team member with animals vaccinated at Jeldessa.

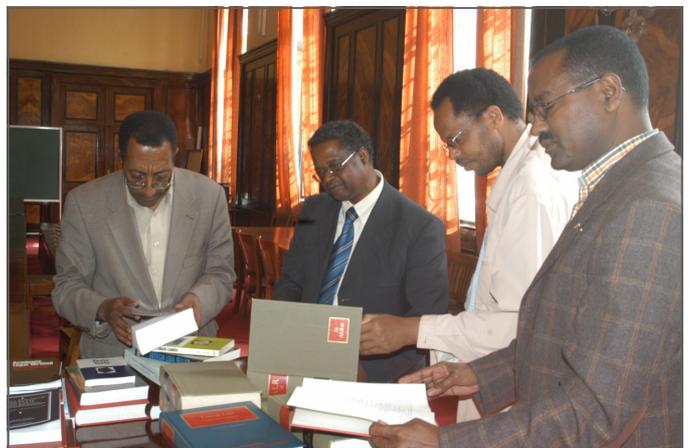
Ethiopia as well as Civil Affairs teams based in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa.♦

Ambassador Delivers Hundreds of Books to Addis Ababa . . .

(Continued from page 1)

At the handover ceremony in AAU’s Senate Hall, Ambassador Yamamoto said that the U.S. Government “is committed to education and universities in Ethiopia,” and vowed to continue our support through exchange programs and provision of information resources.

Accepting the books, Dr. Bute Gotu, Vice President of Academic Affairs at AAU, said he hoped the law school would make the resources widely available, enhancing the university’s library service. Ato Aman Assefa, Assistant Dean of the AAU Law Faculty, noted that half of the books would be sent to Mekele University, and expressed appreciation to Duquesne University’s Professor Tsegay for organizing the donation.♦



AAU Faculty members looking at the books.

Police Harass Diplomats After Visit to Zimbabwe Hospital

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington -- The May 13 detention and questioning of the U.S. ambassador to Zimbabwe and diplomats from five other missions in Harare by Zimbabwean security forces constitutes harassment and reflects the current troubled atmosphere in the country, the U.S. State Department says.

Ambassador James McGee and the chiefs of mission from the United Kingdom, the European Union and Japan, plus officials from the Netherlands and Tanzania, were detained and questioned for 45 minutes by security forces at a roadblock near the capital, Harare, and again outside a hospital they were visiting, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters May 13.

McCormack said the incidents are "indicative of the kind of atmosphere that exists in Zimbabwe right now," and that if foreign diplomats in Zimbabwe are being treated this way, "you can only imagine for Zimbabwean citizens what life is like if they make an effort to speak up, to voice their opinions."

A senior State Department official said the diplomats had gone to meet with Zimbabwean citizens who had been hospitalized after being attacked by forces loyal to President Robert Mugabe. Violence has been escalating in the country since the March 29 election in which Mugabe's ruling ZANU-PF party lost its majority in parliament and Mugabe himself trailed behind challenger Morgan Tsvangirai in the presidential vote.

In remarks to the Associated Press (AP) May 13, McGee said the United States has confirmed reports of at least 20 deaths and more than 700 incidents of violence since March 29. In a letter published May 12, McGee accused President Mugabe's party of orchestrating violence to intimidate opposition supporters before a proposed presidential runoff election.



Zimbabwe's riot policemen walk on a street in Harare in April 2008

The AP article said the convoy of diplomats visited an alleged ZANU-PF interrogation camp and two hospitals in order to document government-orchestrated violence against its political opposition.

AP reported that at one point during their detention, a police officer threatened to beat a senior U.S. Embassy aide. After McGee demanded the officer's name, the police officer got into the ambassa-

dor's car and lurched toward McGee, making slight contact with the ambassador's shins. AP said McGee then climbed onto the hood of the car while his aide snatched the keys from the ignition.

None of the individuals were physically harmed and nothing was confiscated during the incidents, McCormack said. However, "by

definition, if, on two occasions, you're held up for ... nearly two hours and questioned about what you're doing, by security officials, then yeah, that's harassment," he said.

VIOLENCE MUST END, MONITORS NEEDED IN ORDER TO HAVE A RUNOFF ELECTION

According to official election results released more than a month after

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Campaign of Terror Unleashed in Zimbabwe

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Democracy, Human
Rights, and Labor
Washington, DC
May 7, 2008

Fact Sheet

In the aftermath of the March 29, 2008 elections, President Robert Mugabe's ruling ZANU-PF party has unleashed a wave of political violence designed to cow opposition members and supporters into submission and deter them from participating or voting their conscience in a possible runoff election. Soldiers, police, war veterans and youth mili-

Over 700 documented victims have required medical treatment for post-election violence-related injuries, including over 200 requiring hospitalization and surgical procedures. Many more victims are undocumented and there are increasing reports that government authorities are preventing victims from accessing medical treatment.

At least eighteen deaths have been confirmed.

Victims have suffered severe beatings, fractured bones and severe burns.

Credible reports indicate the military has established torture bases across the country.

More than 130 white-owned commercial farms have come under siege by angry mobs; out of these, some 30 farmers have been forced to abandon their properties.

Reports indicate women and girls have been sexually assaulted.

Government security forces have raided civil society offices, confiscating computers and files, destroying property and intimidating staff.



Police arrest Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) supporters in Harare in this April 25, 2008 file photo.



Opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) supporters from rural areas, displaced after post-election violence, camp at their party headquarters in Harare May 12, 2008.

tia loyal to the ruling party have been deployed in rural areas throughout Zimbabwe to systematically intimidate voters through killings, beatings, looting of property, burning of homes and public humiliation. Women, children and the elderly have not been spared. Civil society groups, particularly those involved in election monitoring, and humanitarian organizations charged with providing desperately needed food assistance also have been targeted.

Victims (below statistics are as of May 5, 2008)

Hundreds of opposition supporters have fled their homes in fear. Homes and businesses throughout rural areas have been burned and cattle and other livestock slaughtered.

At least 6,735 persons have been displaced.

On April 25, police raided the opposition Movement for Democratic Change party headquarters and took over 100 persons into custody. The detainees were later released.

Police raided the offices of the Zimbabwe Election Support Network, the independent organization that monitored the March 29th election.

Government security forces beat more than 50 members of the civil society organization, Women of Zimbabwe Arise, for participation in a pro-democracy protest on May 5; 11 persons were arrested.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

Polls Show Texas Senate Race Extremely Close

*By Michael W. Drudge
Special Correspondent*

San Antonio -- The American Southwest will be the site of a hotly contested Senate election this November, with incumbent Republican John Cornyn facing Democratic state legislator Rick Noriega in Texas.



Republican John Cornyn

Recent polls indicate that if the election were held today, it would be a statistical tie. A Rasmussen Reports telephone poll of 500 likely voters gave Cornyn a lead of just four percentage points -- 47 percent support to 43 percent for Noriega. The poll's margin of error was 4 percent. A separate survey of 600 Texan voters by the Democratic-leaning Daily Kos Web site gave Cornyn a 48-to-44 percent advantage, again with a four-point margin of error.

"Two independent polls in one week show the Texas Senate race is a dead heat," said Noriega campaign manager Mark Bell. "These polls confirm what people across Texas have been telling us. Traditional Texas voters are ready for a change in the U.S. Senate."

But the Cornyn campaign is skeptical, as spokesman Kevin McLaughlin told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

"I just don't think that robo-call is real accurate," McLaughlin said. "For one thing, it shows Noriega with 84 percent name ID [identification], and he's never run statewide before." Robo-call refers to an automated telephonic survey system.

Despite the polls, Cornyn enjoys one enormous advantage over Noriega: the size of his campaign fund. At the end of March, the most recent reporting period, Cornyn had \$8.7 million in cash on hand. Noriega had just less than \$330,000.

Noriega said his is "an insurgent grassroots" campaign that will pick up steam with contributions over the Internet. He has hired the Internet marketing firm that helped Senator James Webb, a Democrat of Virginia, win his seat in 2006. Webb's victory over Republican incumbent George Allen was critical in shifting the Senate to Democratic control.

Money will be an important factor in campaigning in the very large state of Texas, which has 19 media markets, 32 congressional districts and more than 7 million general election voters.

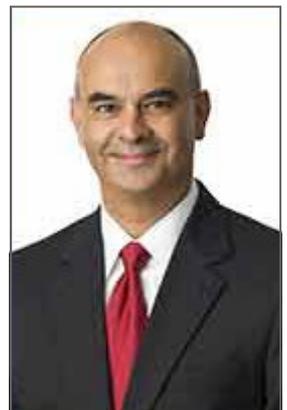
The national Democratic Party is watching Noriega's fundraising effort as it considers whether to put money into his campaign. (See "House, Senate Campaign Committees Set Strategies for 2008 (<http://www.america.gov/st/elections08-english/2007/September/20070910154148ndyblehs6.756008e-03.html>).")

WAR IN IRAQ A KEY ISSUE

As the scramble for contributions unfolds, the candidates are laying out their policy differences for voters to consider. Nothing divides them more than the war in Iraq.

Noriega emphasizes his military experience as a lieutenant colonel in the Texas Army National Guard

who has served in Afghanistan. He even displays his combat boots at campaign stops. He opposes the war in Iraq, and wants to see what he calls a "phased military re-deployment" there.



Democratic State Legislator Rick Noriega

"The failure of Washington politicians like Mr. Cornyn to demand a change in direction in Iraq has let our country down, let our state down, and let our men and women in uniform down," Noriega said. "And it's cost us over \$200 million a day -- money that could be used for investments and middle class tax relief here in America."

Cornyn sits on the Senate Armed Services committee and has been a staunch backer of the Bush administration's Iraq war policy.

"[I]f we were to leave Iraq before the Iraqis are able to govern and defend themselves, it would in-

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Oregon Congressional Incumbent Faces Challenge Within His Party

By Steve Holgate
Special Correspondent

Portland, Oregon -- Something odd is happening in Oregon's 1st Congressional District. An underfinanced candidate with little political experience or name recognition has gained some surprising support for his challenge to the incumbent, Democratic Congressman David Wu. More surprising, the challenge is coming from within Wu's own party.



Representative David Wu (David Wu for Congress)

Will Hobbs, an electronics engineer and former rock musician, won the endorsement of the state's largest daily newspaper, *The Oregonian*, and that of one of the region's leading weekly newspaper, *Willamette Week*.

Even though most incumbents face nominal challenges from within their own party, such challengers generally attract little notice and less support. The fact that Hobbs, a political novice in his first try for elective office, can gain two significant endorsements might say as much about Wu's problems in the district

he has represented for 10 years as it does about Hobbs' strengths.

In fact, *The Oregonian's* endorsement of Hobbs reads like an indictment of Wu's perceived political shortcomings: "To put it politely, the erratic, sometimes incoherent Wu has not won the respect of his House colleagues, a failure reflected in his slim resume of committee appointments and his perennially abysmal power ratings after five terms in Congress."

Willamette Week casts its endorsement in a more positive light, citing Hobbs' knowledge of the issues and his willingness to take clear, strong stands.

Despite these endorsements, Hobbs currently seems a minimal threat to Wu in the May 20th primary. Even though Wu has been criticized for what voters see as a lackluster style and his election victories are seldom by large margins, Hobbs has little money and almost no time left to catch Wu. Hobbs' strong opposition to a liquefied natural gas terminal in the lower Columbia River might gain him votes in Clatsop and Columbia counties but his positions on other issues are not dramatically different from those of Wu. (See "Local and National Issues Vie for Oregon Voters' Attention (<http://www.america.gov/st/elections08-english/2008/January/20080115181425ndyblehs0.1392328.html>).

Two Republicans vying for that party's nomination are, like Hobbs, relatively unknown, politically inexperienced and underfunded. Even if Hobbs gets enough Democratic votes to indicate Wu is vulnerable in

the fall election, the Republican challengers' ability to take advantage of that weakness will be limited. Because the congressional race in another district, the Oregon 5th Congressional District where there will not be an incumbent on the ballot, promises to be among the most hotly contested House campaigns in the country, that race will attract a great deal of financial and political assistance, thus limiting resources available to other con-



Challenger Will Hobbs (Will Hobbs for Congress)

tests.

Hobbs challenge, even if unsuccessful, can damage Wu's prospects for future elections. Even limited success by Hobbs in 2008 could encourage the entry of more serious, better financed, challengers in 2010 from both the Republican and Democratic parties.

(USINFO is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)◆

The Path to the 2008 Presidential Nomination

Washington -- Arizona Senator John McCain has earned the 1,191 pledged delegates he needs to be the Republican Party's presidential nominee, but the race to amass a majority of delegates in the Democratic contest continues.

McCain will not become the official Republican Party nominee until his party's delegates cast their votes at the Republican National Convention in September.

According to the Green Papers, an organization that tracks the delegate count, New York Senator Hillary Clinton's win in the May 6

Obama has 1,589.5 pledged delegates of the 2,025 delegates needed to earn the Democratic Party's nomination. Clinton has 1,427.5 pledged delegates.

(Democrats Abroad and some territories award delegates in half-vote increments so that more delegates can attend the national convention.)

Six states and territories will hold primaries or caucuses between May 13 and June 3.

Because the Democratic Party awards its delegates proportionally, if a candidate receives more than

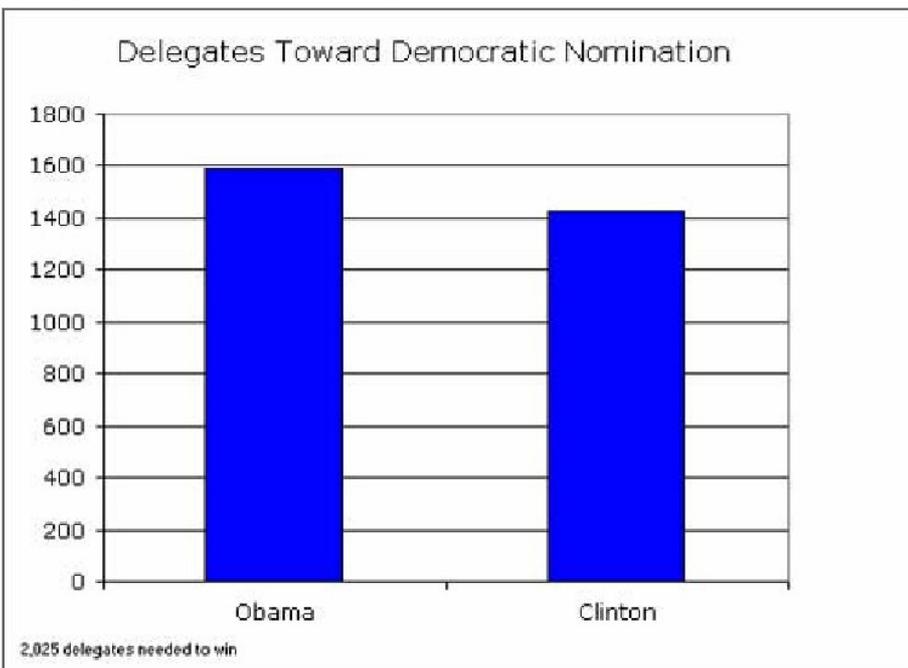
Therefore, both Clinton and Obama likely will continue to earn delegates from each state and territory, making it extremely unlikely that either will earn enough pledged delegates to declare victory. Attention then would turn to the 795 party leaders, the so-called superdelegates, who are not pledged, or bound, to vote for a particular candidate. (See "Superdelegates May Decide Democratic Nominee (<http://www.america.gov/st/elections08-english/2008/February/20080204190330hmnietsua0.9187281.html>).")

Democratic leaders increasingly are concerned that a prolonged nominating contest could hurt their candidate's chances in a general election against McCain. These leaders are encouraging the superdelegates to make their preferences known before the convention so that a count will not be necessary on the convention floor in late August to determine the party nominee. Currently, 268 superdelegates have announced they will vote for Clinton and 247 say they will vote for Obama, according to the Green Papers.

Obama maintains a narrow lead in the delegate count, leads the total popular vote and has won the most votes in more states' contests. Some Obama supporters argue that, based on these factors, Clinton should exit the race now.

Clinton responded to such calls April 22: "Some people counted me out and said to drop out. Well, the American people don't quit and they deserve a president who doesn't quit, either."

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Indiana primary earned her 39 additional delegates. But because all Democratic contests award delegates proportionally, Illinois Senator Barack Obama earned 33 delegates.

Obama's win in the North Carolina primary May 6 earned him 66 delegates. Clinton earned 49 North Carolina delegates.

15 percent of the vote, he or she will receive a portion of the state's delegates. (See "Delegate System Aims to Give Nominating Power to the People (<http://www.america.gov/st/elections08-english/2008/March/20080324140500hmnietsua0.4460871.html>).

The Path to the 2008 Presidential . . .

(Continued from page 8)

Clinton also has said she intends to stay in the race until a plan for counting Florida and Michigan's delegates is worked out.

The Democratic Party has said it does not plan to count Michigan's 128 pledged delegates or Florida's 185 pledged delegates at its convention because those states violated party rules by holding their primaries prior to February 5. As a result of that ruling, Democratic candidates did not campaign in those states. Obama and most other Democratic candidates removed their names from the Michi-

gan ballot. currently is considering options to allow the states' delegations to participate in some fashion.

THE NOMINATION PROCESS

To become a party's nominee for president, a candidate must win the support of a majority of delegates to the party's national convention in the summer of 2008. For whom those delegates will cast their votes is determined by the outcomes of state caucuses and primaries. Convention delegates are divided among states proportionally.

Delegates are "pledged" (or committed) to candidates based on the

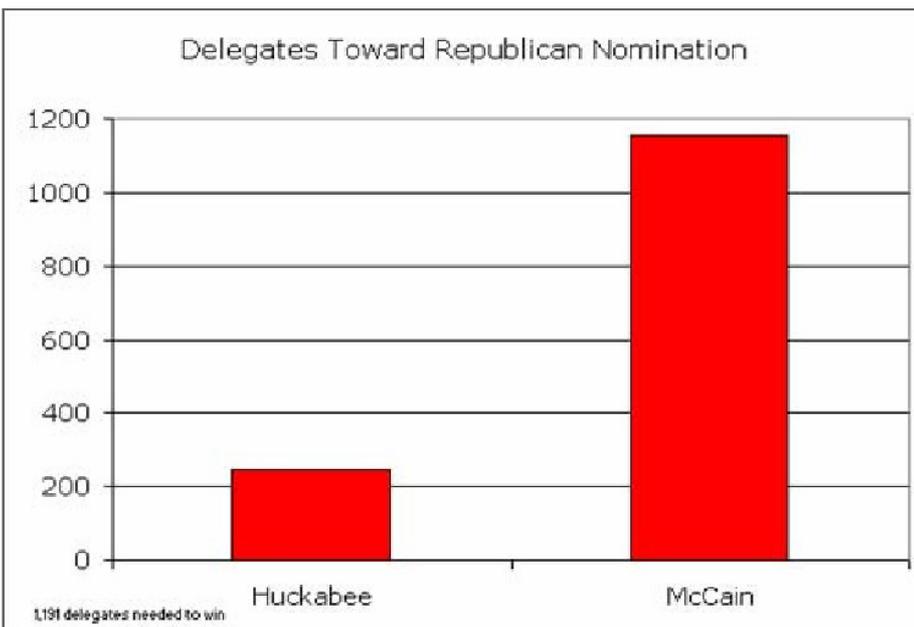
lican parties award all of their delegates to the candidate who receives the most votes.

Some states' party leaders also select a few "unpledged" delegates, and these delegates can vote for any candidate. A candidate must receive a majority of convention votes to secure the party's nomination. If multiple rounds of voting at the convention are required to select a candidate -- something that has not occurred in recent election cycles -- most states allow delegates to change their votes after the first round of voting.

Democrats are slated to select 4,048 delegates, so a candidate would need to receive a majority of 2,025 votes to win the nomination.

Republicans will elect at least 2,380 delegates. The party punished Wyoming, New Hampshire, Michigan, Florida and South Carolina for scheduling their primaries before February 5. These states will only have half their delegates counted. Arizona Senator John McCain has earned more than the 1,191 delegates needed to win the nomination.

For the latest information on the recent races, see the Guide to the 2008 Elections (<http://usinfo.state.gov/politics/elections/>).



gan ballot.

Each state attempted to develop plans for holding new elections in June to allow another opportunity for their delegates to be awarded, but those attempts failed. The party

votes the candidate receives in a state's primary or caucus. Each party in each state has its own guidelines for awarding delegates. However, all Democratic contests must use some form of proportional representation. Many states' Repub-

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

America Stands with Lebanon, Bush Says

By David I. McKeeby
Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States stands with the people of Lebanon against Hezbollah, says President Bush, who urges regional leaders to support Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and step up diplomatic pressure on the militants' sponsors in Syria and Iran.

"I think the Arab world needs to support him," Bush said in a May 12 interview with Al-Arabiya television, "and I think the Arab world needs to make it clear to the Iranians and Syrians that [they should] allow this good man to govern his country without interference."

As Bush sets off for the Middle East, Hezbollah has followed up seizures of territory in western Beirut neighborhoods and the shutdown of Lebanon's airport with new attacks in Tripoli. At least 61 people have been killed and 200 others wounded since Hezbollah launched attacks May 7, in what local media reports have called the worst unrest since the 1975-1990 civil war. (See "Rice Condemns Terrorist Group Hezbollah's Attacks in Lebanon." (<http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2008/May/20080509155736dmslahrellek0.9268.html?CP.rss=true>))

Bush pledged continued U.S. support to strengthen the Lebanese military and safeguard the government. "Given their equipment, they've done a good job," Bush said. "The question then is, can we help them get better equipment and better training in the short run?"

"This is a government that is dedicated to trying to expand the reach of democracy," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said May 12. "That stands in stark contrast to the actions of groups like Hezbollah. They've shown themselves willing to use force of arms and violence to kill innocent Lebanese civilians."

Security assistance must be followed up with diplomatic efforts to marshal international support against Hezbollah sponsors Syria and Iran, Bush added.

"The international community will not allow the Iranian and Syrian regimes, via their proxies, to return Lebanon to foreign domination and control," Bush said in a May 12 statement.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has been in close contact with the Siniora government throughout Lebanon's latest political crisis, Bush said. The Arab League, the United Nations, and the "Friends of Lebanon" -- a 12-nation group including the United States -- also have been following developments in the country closely.

Following talks in Cairo, an Arab League delegation is heading to Beirut in a bid to stop the fighting, while the U.N. Security Council is weighing its options. "We believe there should be action," says U.S. Representative to the United Nations Zalmay Khalilzad.

Lebanon will be among the issues topping Bush's agenda as he meets with leaders in the Middle East May 13-18, Bush said. Its security challenges, like many facing the region,

can be traced directly to disruptive influences emanating from Iran and Syria.

Bush underscored the commitment of the United States to constructive diplomacy. "It's important that we work with friends and allies to see if we can't convince the Iranians to stop funneling monies to these violent groups -- in Syria's case, to put financial pressure on them to adhere to the U.N. Security Council resolutions regarding Lebanon," Bush said.

"The Lebanese people have sacrificed much for the sake of their freedom, and the United States will continue to stand with them against this latest assault on their independence and security," Bush said.

Bush's Al-Arabiya interview (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/May/20080513142815xjsnommis0.7013666.html>), Bush's May 12 statement (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/May/20080513122230xjsnommis0.6582147.html>) on Lebanon, and a statement (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/May/20080513125324eafas0.9723932.html>) from the Friends of Lebanon are available from www.america.gov.

(USINFO is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)◆

Bush to Promote Peace, Regional Dialogue During Visit to Mideast

By Merle D. Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington -- President Bush will mix symbolism and substance during a five-day, three-nation trip to the Middle East that will place considerable emphasis on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and an array of issues from Lebanon to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The president travels to Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt May 13-18.

Bush is marking the 60th anniversary of the founding of Israel and also is commemorating the 75th anniversary of U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia. He will travel to the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh for one-on-one meetings with seven Muslim leaders and will deliver addresses to the Israeli parliament -- the Knesset -- and at the World Economic Forum in the Middle East.

"The president will reaffirm his personal commitment to peace between Israelis and Palestinians, and encourage continuing efforts for a two-state solution, a democratic Israel and a democratic Palestine living side by side in peace and security," says National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley.

Bush says he is hopeful that an agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority can be reached by the end of his presidency in January 2009. But the president will not be meeting with Israeli and Palestinian leaders simultaneously, Hadley said, explaining that it did not seem the time "for a big, high-level, three-way event. It just doesn't feel right as the best

way to advance the negotiations." "At this point, we think the bilateral negotiations are key," he said.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said after her recent trip to the region that the Israelis and Palestinians have the same clear goal. "They are trying to get to an agreement by the end of the year that is going to resolve the core issues," she said.

Hadley said the trip, Bush's second to the region this year and possibly his last before leaving office, also will demonstrate his steadfast opposition to extremists and their state sponsors, Iran and Syria.

Bush launched an intensive diplomatic effort in late 2007 with the Annapolis Conference on the Middle East to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He followed that up with a trip to the region in January and then sent Rice on a five-day trip to Britain, Israel and the West Bank in early May.

Bush told Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas during a visit to Washington in April that "The thing that I'm focused on, and you are, is how to define a state that is acceptable to both sides. I'm confident it can get done." Abbas told Bush that time is of the essence in resolving primary issues.

Core issues to be resolved in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks include the final borders of a Palestin-

ian state, the future of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, Palestinian refugees, water rights and future relations between the two states.



President George W. Bush waves from the steps of Marine One Tuesday, May 13, 2008 on the South Lawn of White House, as he departs on a five-day trip to Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. (White House photo by Eric Draper)

At a pre-trip briefing, Hadley told journalists that Palestinians living in Gaza will have a choice: to join with other Palestinians and statehood, or to continue to live under the oppression of Hamas, a group that the United States has designated as a foreign terrorist organization and that has seized control of the Gaza Strip from the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

Hadley said that Hamas also has a choice to make: to continue the

(Continued on page 15)

U.S. Backs Peaceful Solutions, Democratic Leaders in Middle East

By Merle D. Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington -- U.S. policy for the Middle East is predicated on support for peaceful solutions and a strengthening of democratic leaders against extremists who use violence, repress fundamental freedoms and seek to undermine U.S. and allied interests.

"Assistance will strengthen and expand U.S. capacity for engagement by enhancing our ability to jointly pursue solutions to vital national security issues and combat terrorism and extremism by promoting freedom, democracy, and access to economic opportunity," says Ambassador David Welch, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs.

Welch, testifying May 8 before a congressional subcommittee, said the U.S. budget for fiscal year 2009, which begins October 1, reflects a continued focus on security assistance to promote U.S. objectives in the region. Those objectives include building well-governed democratic states, promoting human rights and reducing poverty, he said. These goals, he added, require a foundation in security.

House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia Chairman Gary Ackerman said at the outset of the hearing the top problems in the Middle East are governance and freedom. Ackerman said he wanted the hearing to

determine if the tools being used by the United States are obsolete for the new challenges emerging in the region.

Welch testified that the 2009 budget reflects the "centrality of the Middle East to United States



*Ambassador David Welch,
Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.*

foreign policy." The most pressing and important commitments are long-term peace, stability and economic growth in the region, he said.

At the top of the U.S. list of priorities is a positive outcome in Iraq, Welch testified. Other priorities include sustaining the security of Israel; advancing a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; countering the Iranian regional threat; enhancing the defensive capabilities of allies in the Gulf; strengthening relations with Egypt, Jordan and the Gulf states; and supporting Lebanese democracy and sovereignty.

"Today the need for a strong U.S. diplomatic profile in the Middle East has increased along with the extent to which the threats to our national security emanate from the region," Welch testified.

And robust assistance levels for the region remain essential to regional security and stability, he said.

George Laudato, a special assistant for the Middle East to the administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, said that in the 50 years the agency has been working in the Middle East, U.S. assistance has been used to provide clean water and sanitation, better health care, modern schools and teacher training and financing for small businesses, roads and ad-

vanced information technology.

The full texts of Ackerman's (<http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/ackerman050808.htm>), Welch's (<http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/wel050808.htm>) and Laudato's (<http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/lau050808.htm>) prepared statements are available from the subcommittee.

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Rice Condemns Terrorist Group Hezbollah's Attacks in Lebanon

By Merle D. Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States continues to offer its full support to the legitimate Lebanese government, and condemns the armed attack by Hezbollah and its allies, says Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.



A Hezbollah supporter burns tires in Beirut as the group clashes with the Lebanese government.
(© AP Images)

"We condemn the use of force by illegitimate armed groups and call upon all parties to respect the rule of law," Rice said May 9 in a prepared statement.

Rice said the United States will stand by the Lebanese government and its citizens through the crisis and provide support as needed.

A Lebanese government spokesman told the Reuters news service that "the armed and bloody coup which is being implemented aims to return Syria to Lebanon and extend Iran's reach to the Mediterranean." Hez-

bollah began street fighting May 7 and had seized large sections of western Beirut by May 9. The group set fire to the offices of the newspaper al-Mustaqbal and forced an affiliated satellite television station off the air.

The eruption of violence marks the most severe sectarian fighting since the 1975-1990 civil war. The current unrest has resulted in the deaths of at least 14 people and the wounding of another 20, according to news reports May 9.

"We are very troubled by the recent actions of Hezbollah," White House deputy press secretary Gordon Johndroe said May 9. "We urge Hezbollah to stop their attempt to defy the lawful decisions taken by the democratically elected Lebanese government. We also urge Iran and Syria to stop their support of Hezbollah and its destabilizing effects on Lebanon."

Earlier in the week, the government ordered Hezbollah to close its telecommunications center in Beirut, which the government regards has a threat to its sovereignty. Fighting then escalated May 8 after the government said it would shut down the network.

Hezbollah and its allies, backed by Syria and Iran, are killing and injuring Lebanese and undermining the

legitimate authority of the government, Rice said.

"Seeking to protect their state-within-a-state, Hezbollah has exploited its allies and demonstrated its contempt for its fellow Lebanese," Rice said. "No one has a right to deprive Lebanese citizens of their political and economic freedom, their right to move freely within their country, or their sense of safety and security."

As in past years, the United States has identified Hezbollah as a foreign terrorist organization in its 2007 Country Reports on Terrorism, released in April.

The full text of Rice's statement (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/May/20080509151302eaifas0.2030298.html>) is available on America.gov.

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Secretary Rice to Travel to Sweden and Iceland

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
May 8, 2008

STATEMENT BY SPOKESMAN SEAN MCCORMACK

Secretary of State Rice will travel to Sweden and Iceland from May 28 to May 30.

In Stockholm, she will participate in the International Compact with Iraq (ICI), which remains a central focus of our efforts to work with the Iraqi government on a clear, measurable plan of economic reforms. Since the launching of the Compact, Iraq's donors have stepped forward to reduce Iraq's Saddam-era debts by a total of \$18 billion, and partner funding commitments to the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI) have risen by more than \$300 million. She will meet with donors who have worked bilaterally to build ministerial and provincial capacity and increase the involvement of the private sector. She will also meet separately with senior Swedish officials to discuss issues of bilateral importance. In Reykjavik, she will meet with senior Icelandic officials to discuss important bilateral and regional issues.



File Photo:- Secretary Rice with from left to right are China's Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs He Yafei, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, British Foreign Secretary David Miliband, German Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and EU Foreign Policy Chief Javier Solana at press conference at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London, Friday, May 2, 2008. (AP ImagePhoto Tools)

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)◆

U.S. Special Envoy to Islamic Organization to Discuss His Work

Sada Cumber was appointed special envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on March 3. He serves as the U.S. representative to the OIC, working to facilitate dialogue and cooperation with Muslim communities worldwide.

On May 21 at 8:30 a.m. EDT (1230 GMT), join Cumber for a video webchat to discuss his role in developing new, lasting links among diverse communities and his impressions of the Muslim com-



*Sada Cumber
Special Envoy, Organization of
the Islamic Conference*

munities with which he has interacted over the first two months of his appointment.

Before his appointment, Cumber was an entrepreneur and investor based in Austin, Texas. He has founded 11 technology-based companies, including Texas Global, an international strategic advising firm, and CACH Capital Management, an investment advisory and wealth management firm. Cumber was born in Karachi, Pakistan, in

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Polls Show Texas Senate Race Extremely . . .

(Continued from page 6)

crease the likelihood that Iraq would become a failed state," Cornyn said after a recent committee meeting to review Iraq policy. "This would be much like Afghanistan was following the exit of the Soviet Union in 1989, which, as we all know, gave rise to the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

We saw the consequences of that breeding ground for terrorism on September 11, 2001."

The election in November will hinge on several variables. Cornyn has the advantages of incumbency and he has won statewide office four

times. A Democrat last won a Senate seat in Texas in 1988.

Noriega, who is a Mexican American, could get a boost if Hispanic voters turn out in large numbers. The March Democratic primary race between Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama set a turnout record, and Noriega won a four-candidate race without having to face a runoff.

Still, the challenger faces what Jennifer Duffy of The Cook Political Report calls "an uphill climb."

"Cornyn's [poll] numbers aren't stellar," Duffy told the Austin

American-Statesman. "But he will be tough to beat."

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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Bush to Promote Peace, Regional Dialogue During Visit to . . .

(Continued from page 11)

status quo, or to join the peace process and move forward. To accomplish the latter, Hamas must do the following:

Renounce terrorism;

Recognize the right of Israel to exist; and

Accept the international agreements that already have been agreed to between Israelis and Palestinians as the foundation for peace.

In Israel, Bush will meet with Israeli President Shimon Peres, followed by separate meetings with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Bush also will deliver brief remarks at an

international conference to celebrate Israel's 60th anniversary and deliver longer remarks before the Knesset. He also will meet with Middle East Quartet envoy Tony Blair to discuss international assistance for efforts to build Palestinian institutions.

In Saudi Arabia, Bush will meet with Saudi King Abdullah at his private farm, and mark the 75th anniversary of formal U.S.-Saudi relations, Hadley said.

During his two days at Sharm el-Sheikh, Bush will meet with host Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Palestinian President Abbas and Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Jordan's King Abdullah II, Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad

Siniora and Iraqi Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi and Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih.

In his meetings with Karzai, Bush will reaffirm the U.S. commitment to a stable and democratic Afghanistan, Hadley said, and discuss the upcoming Afghan Support Conference in Paris June 12-13.

While in Sharm el-Sheikh, Bush will address the World Economic Forum in the Middle East at the National Congress Center before returning to Washington.

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Ellis Island Honors Immigrants to United States

By Melody Merin
Special Correspondent

Washington -- Some 40 percent of Americans can trace their ancestry to immigrants who passed through the Ellis Island immigration center between 1892 and 1954.

Among those immigrants were the songwriter Irving Berlin, who arrived from Russia in 1893 when he was 5, and Bob Hope, who emigrated from England in 1908 at age 4. (His birth name was Leslie Hape.)

Each year, the Ellis Island Family Heritage Awards honor the accomplishments of immigrants such as Berlin, Hope and America's first female secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, who was born in Czechoslovakia and became a U.S. citizen in 1957.

The awards also recognize descendants of immigrants who came through Ellis Island, such as former Secretary of State Colin Powell, the son of Jamaican immigrants, and filmmaker Martin Scorsese, whose grandparents came from Sicily.

Situated at the mouth of the Hudson River in the New York Harbor, Ellis Island was the first entry point for the millions of immigrants who arrived by steamship in search of great opportunities and freedom they believed the United States could offer. The iconic Statue of Liberty, located on Liberty Island near Ellis Island, came to symbolize liberty and democracy, and it often was the first image immigrants would see as their ship neared the harbor.

On April 17, 1907, immigration officials processed the largest number

of immigrants in a single day -- 11,747 -- ever at Ellis Island. To mark that occasion, the Ellis Island Foundation established April 17 as "Ellis Island Family History Day" and opened the American Family Immigration History Center in 2001.



Actress Cicely Tyson waves to her family during the Ellis Island Family Heritage Awards ceremony in 2003. (© AP Images)

The foundation -- which was created in 1982 to raise funds for and oversee the historic restorations of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island -- also instituted the Ellis Island Family Heritage Awards to celebrate Ellis Island "as the Golden Door to America for the 17 million immigrants who set foot on American soil there," according to its Web site. The awards ceremony is held each year on April 17.

"How wonderful to come from this immigrant stock, rooted in dreams, and boldness, and endurance," Lee Iacocca, founding chairman of the Ellis Island Foundation, said in 2004. "It is a pedigree to be proud of."

PAST AND PRESENT HONOREES

The first Ellis Island Family Heritage Awards were presented in 2001 to Irving Berlin's family and to three

Ellis Island immigrants who came to America as children: 103-year-old Marinus deNooyer, from the Netherlands; 86-year-old Felicita (Gabaccia) Salto, from Italy; and 88-year-old Seymour Rexsite, from Poland, who became a star of the Yiddish theater in New York.

Bob Hope was honored in 2003, a few months before his death.

The 2008 honorees were author Mary Higgins Clark, whose father emigrated from Ireland in 1906; the Forbes family, descendants of Scottish immigrant B.C. Forbes, founder of the nation's oldest major business magazine, Forbes; former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, whose paternal grandfather came from Lebanon in 1900; and comedian Mel Brooks, son of an émigré from Austria.

The honorees received a framed copy of the original ship's passenger manifest documenting the arrival of their family members in America. At the awards presentation, Iacocca -- himself the son of Italian immigrants -- said, "Each and every one of these honorees -- these sons and daughters of Ellis Island -- represent what I admire most about Americans: the drive to succeed, even in the face of adversity, the leadership and creativity to forge their way."

Some other honorees are Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Frank McCourt, who was born in New York but spent his childhood in Ireland; baseball legend Yogi Berra, the son of Italian immigrants; Nobel laureate Murray Gell-Mann, whose family emigrated from Ukraine; and Duke University basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski, who was appointed

(Continued on page 17)

Ellis Island Honors Immigrants to United . . .

(Continued from page 16)

U.S. basketball head coach for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. His grandfather emigrated from Poland.

Another award was instituted in 2004 -- the Peopling of America Award -- to honor immigrants who arrived via a port of entry other than Ellis Island. The first recipient was I.M. Pei, who emigrated from China in 1935 to study architecture. He has designed more than 60 projects in the United States and abroad. Artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude, who emigrated from Bulgaria and France, respectively, and Philippine-born designer Josie Natori also have been honored.

More information on the family history center (<http://www.ellisland.org/>) and the family heritage awards (http://www.ellisland.org/genealogy/ellis_island_2005_heritage_awards.asp) is available on the Web site of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation. Individuals can search archives that contain passenger names, age, date of arrival at Ellis

Island, ship of travel and other information.

Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty are now national monuments. Information about Ellis Island (<http://www.nps.gov/ellis>) and the Statue of Liberty (<http://www.nps.gov/stli/index.htm>) is available on the National Park Service Web site.

See also "Arab Immigrants to America Are Part of Ellis Island History (<http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2002/Agust/20020812151251pkurata@pd.state.gov0.2198755.html>)" and "Immigration and U.S. History. (<http://www.america.gov/st/diversity-english/2008/February/20080307112004ebyessedo0.1716272.html>)" and



Immigrant children, Ellis Island, New York. Vintage print. By Brown Brothers, ca. 1908--Records of the Public Health Service. (90-G-125-29)

More information about the American experience is available on Diversity (<http://amlife.america.gov/amlife/diversity/index.html>).

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U.S. Special Envoy to Islamic Organization . . .

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1951 and holds a bachelor's degree in commerce and a master's degree in history from the University of Karachi. He came to the United States in 1978 and has been an American citizen since 1986.

This video webchat will take place at <http://state.acrobat.com/SadaCumber/>. No registration is

needed. Simply choose "Enter as a Guest," type in your preferred screen name and join the discussion. The chat room will open two hours prior to the live event. Send your early questions to askamerica@state.gov (<mailto:askamerica@state.gov>).

See also: <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2008/March/20080328171848xjsnommi>

s0.1997906.html, "Sada Cumber Discusses New Role as U.S. Envoy to the OIC."

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

Ethiopian Lawyer Builds Strong Foundation for Women's Rights

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington -- Although Meaza Ashenafi is a lawyer by profession, her work reflects the spirit of an architect and builder.

She uses her legal skills to design a better life for Ethiopian women, a life that includes freedom from violence, equal rights, and access to education and political participation. She has built a durable foundation for these designs via laws incorporated into the Constitution of Ethiopia. These provisions protect the rights of women and children.

Her deft use of her talents and her lasting commitment to improving the circumstances of Ethiopian women led to her nomination for the 2008 International Women of Courage Award. The award, founded in 2007 by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, celebrates exceptional courage and leadership in advocating for women's rights and advancement.

U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia Donald Yamamoto has called Ashenafi "one of the most respected women in Ethiopia."

In 1986, Ashenafi became the only woman in her class to graduate from Addis Ababa University with a law degree. After completing her studies, she served as a high court judge in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital city. In 1993, she served as

a legal adviser to the Ethiopian Constitution Commission of Ethiopia's transitional government. It was then that she led in drafting the country's constitution to include protections for the rights of women and children.

In an effort to improve the socio-political status of women, Ashenafi founded in 1995 the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA), a nonprofit, nonpartisan voluntary association dedicated to the promotion of economic, educational, political, social and full legal



Ambassador Yamamoto (center) poses for photo with Meaza Ashenafi (left) and husband Dr. Assefa Araya.

rights for women. EWLA volunteers provide legal aid services to distressed women.

In recognition of her contributions to Africa and her work at the EWLA, Ashenafi was awarded, in January 2003, the Africa Leadership Prize by the Hunger Project, a global organization with a mission to empower women.

In 2004, she became the executive director of the InterAfrica Group (IAG). The IAG is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan regional organization dedicated to the advancement of humanitarian principles, peace and development across Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa via research, public education and advocacy.

Ashenafi returned to school in 2006 to earn a master's degree and is currently working for the Economic Commission for Africa, a regional

arm of the United Nations Economic and Social Council that promotes economic and social development, intraregional integration and international cooperation. Most recently, she has been engaged in organizing political debates.

Ashenafi has come a long way since her birth in the small Ethiopian town of Asossa near the border with Sudan. Her mother, one of eight children, never had the opportunity to receive a formal education. But now, thanks to Ashenafi, Ethiopian women can aspire to great things.

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Reintegration Often Tougher for Girl Child Soldiers

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington -- Recovering from the stresses of soldiering in war is difficult for children; it is especially so for girl soldiers who often find stigmatization hinders their efforts to return to peacetime lives.

Information on girl soldiers is difficult to obtain, acknowledges Michael Wessells, author of the book *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection*. "We just don't have good data," he told *America.gov*. "And I think the primary reason is the enormous stigma. For a girl to do difficult things, like killing and maiming, is unthinkable. It is much more unthinkable than it is for a boy."

Wessells, a psychologist and professor at Columbia University and Randolph-Macon College, has many years of experience working as a child-protection practitioner with Christian Children's Fund, a nonprofit organization that assists some 13 million children and their families in 31 countries. The fund helps children of all faiths.

He said child-protection practitioners only recently have been able to uncover evidence that suggests more than 10,000 girls might have been used as soldiers during the decades-long war in Angola, he said. That paucity of information is common wherever child soldiers are used, he added.

Child soldiers are known to have been used in conflicts throughout Africa and in Colombia, Sri Lanka, Burma, the Philippines, Iran, Iraq and Chechnya.

As a result, most former girl soldiers -- whether they were recruited or abducted; whether they served as combatants or simply in support roles -- try to hide their experiences, Wessells said. They fear they will not be able to marry and have normal family lives.

In Africa, where use of child soldiers has been especially prevalent, "family relations really matter a lot in the eyes of the community," Wessells said. "We are dealing with, for the most part, collectivist societies where the girls define their well-being not in terms of their individual well-being, but in terms of their social relations and how well

couples are seen by their communities as having chosen to continue a military lifestyle rather than integrate into civilian life.

Heartbreak faces even those former girl soldiers with children who can find new husbands in peacetime. In West Africa and other parts of rural sub-Saharan Africa, the new husband often will not accept the children of his wife's previous relationships, Wessells said. Those children are sent away to family members willing to take them; often they are marginalized or exploited.

HELPING GIRLS HELP THEMSELVES



A young female Tamil Tiger rebel rides a bus in Sri Lanka. (© AP Images)

The problem with programs trying to help former child soldiers is that they do not look at how the children themselves perceive their needs, according to Wessells.

"We don't always do a very good job of listening to young people," Wessells said. "One of the questions that comes up in regard to girls is: Have we taken adequate time to understand what the girls' view of reintegration is?"

accepted they are by peers and elders and others," he said.

Often girl soldiers are forced into exclusive sexual relationships by their captors. When babies result, the girls, who might have found a measure of protection in these unions, regard the fathers as "real" husbands, Wessells said. But these so-called "bush marriages" don't endure in peacetime, he added, especially in rebel groups, because the

To address this issue, Wessells is working with the Christian Children's Fund and 10 other agencies in a participatory action research (PAR) program in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Uganda. It focuses on more than 600 former girl soldiers who are mothers.

The goal, Wessells said, "is to put the power in the hands of girls; to have them go through a process wherein they organize themselves, define what reintegration means to

(Continued on page 25)

United States Offers Initial Earthquake Aid to China

By David I. McKeeby
Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States will send China an initial \$500,000 toward disaster relief efforts following a massive earthquake and stands ready to send additional aid as needed.

President Bush made the offer in a May 13 call to Chinese President Hu Jintao, says White House spokesman Dana Perino.

Chengdu in China's Sichuan province, toppling schools, apartments and factories, according to Chinese officials.

"I am particularly saddened by the number of students and children affected by this tragedy," Bush said in a May 12 statement. "The United States stands ready to help in any way possible."

As rescue operations continue, thousands more still may be buried

in the rubble, authorities fear. Area residents are taking shelter outdoors as aftershocks continue to rock the region.

In a May 12 briefing, OFDA Director Ky Luu said that USAID has several disaster response tools to offer

China, including the ability to aid nongovernmental organizations already operating in a country, its disaster assistance response teams, as well America's domestic network of 28 urban search-and-rescue teams, which in recent years have been deployed to Guatemala and Nicaragua to save lives following hurricanes, and in Iran following the December 2003 earthquake in the southeastern city of Bam.

"Our ambassador and other colleagues [in China] are working very closely with their counterparts, and the moment that there is a request that's forthcoming, we are prepared to do what we can," Luu said.

During their conversation, the two leaders also discussed efforts to convince Burma's leaders to allow international relief workers into the country to help Burma's citizens recover from Cyclone Nargis.

Tibet also was a topic of discussion, Perino said. According to Perino, Bush encouraged Chinese leaders to continue reaching out to representatives of the exiled Dalai Lama to address long-standing issues in the Himalayan region.

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Primary school students in northwest China's Gansu Province squat under their desks during an earthquake that devastated much of neighboring Sichuan Province on May 12, 2008.

"It's an initial contribution in response to the event," said Perino, who added that the White House would consider extending further aid as requested once damage assessments were completed.

The funds will come from the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) in advance of an expected appeal for aid from the International Red Cross.

More than 12,000 people were killed May 12 when a 7.9-magnitude quake struck near



People flee buildings in Chongqing after a massive earthquake struck neighboring Sichuan Province on May 12, 2008.

First U.S. Disaster Aid Shipment Arrives in Burma

By David I. McKeeby
Staff Writer

Washington -- U.S. humanitarian assistance began arriving for the people of Burma as authorities finally allowed the first of three American C-130 cargo planes to deliver supplies, and the United States pledged an additional \$13 million for communities ravaged by Cyclone Nargis more than a week ago.

Henrietta Fore, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and Admiral Timothy Keating, commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, emerged from the cargo plane to greet Burmese officials, offering an aid package for 30,000 people, including 8,300 bottles of water, 1,350 blankets and 10,800 insecticide-treated bed nets, said Ky Luu, director of USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance.

"The commodities that we were able to bring in today, the commodities that other U.N. colleagues and nongovernmental organization colleagues are bringing in represent a small fraction of what is needed," Luu said at a May 12 briefing.

Luu said the \$13 million in new aid the United States is providing is a donation to the U.N. World Food Programme, consisting of both food and funding to support its delivery, bringing total U.S. disaster assistance to Burma to \$16.25 million.

According to the Burmese government, Cyclone Nargis, which struck the Irrawaddy Delta May 2, has claimed 31,938 lives with and additional 34,460 people still missing. Aid agencies estimate that as many

as 1.5 million people are in need of immediate assistance. "We're working through all avenues right now to make sure that supplies reach the intended victims as quickly as possible," Luu said.

Earlier in the day, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed "deep concern and immense frustration" with the Burmese government for its "unacceptably slow response to this grave humanitarian crisis."

But getting goods into the aid pipeline is only half the challenge, Luu said, and must be followed up by the establishment of a delivery network capable of getting aid to communities as quickly as possible. "We're pressing for the authorities really to be able to open up and issue visas for the humanitarian community as a whole," said Luu.

USAID goods were received and loaded into Burmese helicopters for delivery to the Bogalay Township, Luu said, and the C-130 returned to Bangkok, Thailand, within two hours of arrival. Burmese authorities have authorized two additional U.S. aid flights in the coming days, Luu said, but it remained to be seen whether aid workers would be issued visas or even be allowed to leave the airport.

Burmese military personnel unloaded the C-130 by hand, Luu said, illustrating their need for more efficient logistics. "If you were able to bring in flights, most likely they would be stacked up at the tarmac," Luu said.

By lifting visa restrictions, Burma's leaders could help USAID speed up disaster recovery and save more lives by helping to prevent post-

storm disease outbreaks. "We need the disaster experts who have capacity to be able to deliver the assistance. And this has to be done as soon as possible," said Luu.

UNITED STATES READY TO SEND QUAKE AID TO CHINA

If requested, the United States also is ready to send aid to China, where a magnitude 7.8 earthquake in western Sichuan province May 12 killed more than 8,000 people and injured more than 10,000 others.

"The thoughts and prayers of the American people are with the Chinese people," President Bush said in a May 12 statement. "The United States stands ready to help in any way possible."

Luu said that USAID has several disaster response tools, including the ability to aid nongovernmental organizations already operating in a country, its Disaster Assistance Response Teams, as well as a domestic network of 28 urban search and rescue teams, which in recent years have saved lives in Guatemala and Nicaragua following hurricanes, and in Iran following the December 2003 earthquake in the southeastern city of Bam.

"Our ambassador and other colleagues at post [in China] are working very closely with their counterparts, and the moment that there is a request that's forthcoming, we are prepared to do what we can," Luu said.

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U.N. Food Aid Agency Urges Countries to Lift Food Export Bans

By Kathryn McConnell
Staff Writer

Washington -- The head of the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) has called on countries that ban exports of food commodities to lift those restrictions so more food can be available for humanitarian aid.

Approximately 40 countries have imposed bans as world commodity prices have increased several times in the past year. As a result, WFP is having trouble securing enough food for aid, WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran told a meeting at the International Institute of Economics in Washington May 6.

She called the crisis a silent tsunami that threatens to plunge more than 100 million people around the world into hunger.

Sheeran said purchasing problems affect WFP's ability to get food to areas where it is needed, such as Sudan. Export bans have forced WFP to go further from areas in need to seek food stocks, which adds to the time and logistical challenges of getting food to starving Sudanese and other populations, she said at the International Institute of Economics in Washington May 6.

WFP is facing the challenge of the "fusing of the fuel and food markets," she said. Food producers are breaking supply contracts with the WFP, accepting broken contract penalties, then selling their crops

instead to biofuel producers at higher prices, Sheeran said.

WFP is seeking \$755 million from donors to make up for a projected fiscal year 2008 budget shortfall caused by soaring food and transportation costs. This is a significant jump from the end of February, when WFP estimated it would need an additional \$500 million.



World Food Programme

WFP also is calling for a more coherent and increased international response to world hunger.

In the short- and medium-term, donors can provide seeds and fertilizer to farmers in developing countries so they can increase their production, Sheeran said. Donors also can support efforts to identify groups of people newly vulnerable to hunger

and malnutrition and provide them with safety nets.

Among the most vulnerable are refugees and people who are unsettled within their own countries, mothers and infants, HIV/AIDS patients, small-scale farmers and people living in cities on less than \$1 a day.

Safety nets target aid to these groups by providing supplemental and school feeding programs to help households with low incomes meet their basic dietary needs.

The need for such systems can be seen in Haiti, for instance, where approximately half the population is malnourished and 60 percent of household income goes to food. Non-nutritional mud cakes, traditionally used for medicinal purposes, are now being used as food because they are the only thing people can afford, she said.

In Burundi, the country's staple food -- cassava -- has gone up in price 200 percent since mid 2007. Poor households now are consuming moldy cassava, which in recent months has gone up in price three-fold, Sheeran said.

Donors can work to provide aid recipients with more vouchers so they can purchase locally produced food, which is now too expensive to buy without help, she suggested.

Officials also can shift their policies

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Rewards for Justice Program for Rwanda Genocide Renewed . . .

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were committed, and their continuing presence in the region, represents a threat to stability and reconciliation."

Seven additional fugitives are being sought under the program: Fulgence Kayishema, Bernard Munyagishari, Pheneas Munyarugarama, Aloys Ndimbati, Charles Ryandikayo, Charles Sikubwabo and Jean Bosco Uwinkindi.

The State Department is cooperating with other governments, with the United Nations and with the ICTR to make it harder for these fugitives to remain at large. The Rewards for Justice program, Williamson explained, is one element of an international effort to tighten the net around those still being sought.

Because many of the fugitives are believed to be living in the Democratic Republic of Congo, this Rewards for Justice campaign will be focused there, he said.

In the next weeks, Williamson said, the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa will work with the U.N. missions and other partners in the Congo to distribute posters, matchbooks and other articles indicating that these men are wanted for genocide and advertising a financial reward of up to \$5 million for information that leads to their arrest.

Information generated by the Rewards for Justice campaign will support the efforts of the ICTR, whose team of investigators continues to pursue fugitives.

Callixte Nzabonimana, an indicted government minister, was arrested in March, thanks to cooperation between the ICTR's tracking team and the government of Tanzania, Williamson said. Nzabonimana now awaits trial at the ICTR.

"As this shows, some of the most critical steps to ending the impunity of these fugitives must be taken by national governments in the region," Williamson said. "Just last week, the government of Kenya persuaded a Kenyan court to freeze real estate property from which Felicien Kabuga, the ICTR's most wanted indictee, is believed to have drawn funds to support his life at large." He called this "a welcome

development," but added, "It's our strong hope that this represents only a single step toward still more aggressive action from all the governments in the region to capture these men.

"We look forward to seeing the results from this campaign. We believe it will accelerate the process of bringing to justice those most responsible for these horrible crimes," he said.

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U.N. Food Aid Agency Urges Countries to Lift Food . . .

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to allow more purchases of food from farmers in developing countries, Sheeran said. That change would support local economic development and allow aid to reach people who need it faster than by costly transoceanic shipment.

President Bush has called on Congress to support a request to allow America to purchase up to 25 percent of food aid from farmers in developing countries. The measure is included in a new multiyear farm bill Congress is still debating.

Long-term responses to the crisis involve policy reforms by both food aid donors and recipients.

Sheeran said that without an increase in the international response to the food crisis there will be more hunger and malnutrition around the world, causing the overall health of poor people and rates of school attendance to decline.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The United Nations is calling for an international meeting to be held at its Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) June 3-5. The gathering will focus on how agriculture can continue to produce adequate quantities of food for the world's growing population, particularly the poor and vulnerable, in changing climatic conditions, FAO said.

Sheeran said WFP is changing from an emergency food aid provider to an agency involved in agricultural development aimed at stabilizing food supply systems and allowing a reduction of dependency of food aid.

These efforts include training farmers in improved production methods and rebuilding infrastructure.

For instance, she said, in recent years WFP has planted 5 billion trees, which are helping to stabilize

See also "U.S. Provides \$3.25 Million to Aid Burma Cyclone Victims (<http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2008/May/20080506154943dmslahrellek0.832699.html>)" and "U.N. Calls for New Food Donations, Predicts



Ms. Josette Sheeran, the eleventh Executive Director of WFP, talks to the press at the central grain market in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 23, April 2007. (Getty Images)

ground soils, and built thousands of kilometers of roads.

Sheeran said the WFP is coordinating with other donors to get food and other lifesaving supplies to Burma, devastated earlier in May by a massive cyclone. Because Burma is part of Asia's greatest rice-producing area, "the storm compounds the problem of lost rice production," she said.

The United States is the world's largest food aid donor, contributing about half of all food aid. It provides approximately 40 percent of contributions to the WFP.

Long-term Success (<http://www.america.gov/st/foraid-english/2008/April/20080416114245akllennocm0.3393213.html?CP.rss=true>)."

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Reintegration Often Tougher for Girl . . .

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them; ask what's missing, and then design small actions and steps.

"One of the things that is happening so far is that they feel they don't want to single themselves out too much," Wessells said. "So they've begun working with community advisory committees that they've set up, and they [the committees] consist in some cases of men as well as women. The whole idea is to try to not put themselves above the community but to work through and with the community."

Some of the former girl soldiers are serving their communities or starting small businesses, he said. Although the program is only part way complete, the results seem promising. "The girls are saying they feel they are visible for the first time, that they have a voice and that they're very proud of what they themselves are able to accomplish with their

friends and the adults in the community and with their children," Wessells said

Gender inequality remains an issue.

"I think it is a mistake," Wessells said, "to think of reintegration as some nice benefits that happen in a post-conflict environment. It has to be part of a much wider movement toward the achievement of girls' rights and all human rights." Violence against women, he said, is endemic in many patriarchal societies.

"The problems of girl soldiers are only one small element in a much wider array of girls' issues and denial of girls' rights," Wessells said.

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Police Harass Diplomats After Visit to Zimbabwe . . .

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the vote, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai won the most presidential votes, but not enough needed to avoid a runoff election.

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer said May 12 that conditions currently do not exist in Zimbabwe for the country to hold a free and fair vote. (See "Zimbabwe Final Vote Tally Has Serious Credibility Problems (<http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2008/May/20080502155526esnamfuak0.7347376.html>).")

"Those conditions would have to include an end to the violence, which is essentially state-sponsored violence against the opposition. [And] it would have to include a massive number of monitors that can go out into the rural area," she said.

She also called for guarantees of safety for Tsvangirai, who is currently outside the country, and for the admission into the country of the international press to provide greater transparency for the election proceedings.

Frazer said the United States is "prepared to assist and support the creation of those conditions"

by supporting organizations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union, and by working with the United Nations.

Zimbabwe's government has not announced the date for the runoff election. "Certainly, if they pull a surprise and they say that the runoff is in a week, it's very unlikely that you're going to have the number of monitors there necessary for a free and fair runoff," she said.

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