



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

2007 Conference of the East African Fine Coffee Association Takes Place in Ethiopia, the Birthplace of Coffee

The largest-ever coffee conference in Africa was held last week in Ethiopia with nearly 600 delegates representing 40 countries from around the world. The United States Agency for International Development provided partial support for the conference, which included other first-ever events like a 'Barista Championship' coffee servers competition, and a Specialty Coffee Auction, to increase awareness and exports of Ethiopian coffee. USAID/Ethiopia Mission Director Glenn Anders delivered remarks at the Conference's opening



USAID/Ethiopia Mission Director Glenn Anders and Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Seyoum Mesfin view exhibits at the EAFCA Conference in Addis Ababa on February 15, 2007

ceremony. USAID is investing over one million dollars a year in Ethiopia to increase the technical skills of coffee farmers

and sellers, in areas ranging from production practices such as mulching to environmentally friendly

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USAID and Coca-Cola Improve Water and Sanitation Services in Amhara Region

Bahir Dar, Ethiopia- The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and The Coca-Cola Company on Wednesday, February 2 launched a \$750,000 water, sanitation and environmental hygiene partnership in Amhara Region in collaboration with the Amhara Regional Health and Water Bureaus. The

Amhara Community Watershed Partnership Project is part of an \$8 million global alliance between USAID and Coca-Cola to promote sound water resource management and sustainable service delivery in countries where both partners operate.

This project will supply potable water to commu-

nities, improve sanitation and hygiene practices in schools and households, and raise public awareness about environmental protection and conservation for sustainable access to water. The project includes twelve Kebeles in Bure, Dura, and Achefar Woredas, and will provide benefits to over 45,000 people. ♦

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U.S. Official Dispels “Alarmist Views” of China in Africa

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington — The United States does not regard China's emerging interest in Africa as a security threat, says an African affairs specialist at the State Department.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs James Swan says he wants to dispel “alarmist views” appearing in the press and even in scholarly journals concerning China's growing interest and influence in Africa. Swan spoke February 9 at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

China's role in Africa has become such a hot topic, Swan told the scholars, that the U.S. State Department hosted a conference on China in Africa in December 2006 following China's Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, held earlier in Beijing, which drew 43 African heads of state and representatives from five other African nations.

The Beijing meeting was significant, Swan said, because it attracted more African leaders “than normally attend an African Union summit on the continent.”

Chinese President Hu Jintao again is touring Africa during February, his third visit in three years. In what Swan called a “sober, realistic look” at China's engagement with the nations of sub-Saharan Africa, he told the Columbia University audience that China's policy “motivations and intentions” are not unusual for a large and growing global power.

In recent decades, he said, China has re-emerged as a major eco-

nomical, diplomatic and military entity on the world scene. “It is important that we see China's role on the continent within this broader context,” he added.

China has important interests in Africa, Swan said, which include access to resources and markets and the pursuit of diplomatic allies. “None of these is inherently threatening to U.S. interests. And be-

peace and prosperity, and exhibit behavior commensurate with its status as a global power.”

In that regard, he said, China has made positive contributions, such as taking part in international peacekeeping operations in Africa, where it has deployed more than 1,300 troops to Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and southern Sudan.



A billboard in Beijing promotes the China-Africa summit held in late 2006 which drew 43 African leaders. The summit was meant to highlight China's growing role in Africa. (AP Images)

cause China has real interests there,” he explained, “it will, of course, be engaged on the continent,” as is the United States.

Swan said U.S. policy is “not to curtail China's involvement in Africa, but to seek cooperation where possible; moderate negative influences in some key areas, especially governance and human rights; and continue efforts to nudge China toward becoming a responsible international stakeholder.”

This means, he said, that “we want China to act in ways that help bolster the global system and promote

On the negative side, Swan said, the Chinese have not been very willing to encourage democracy, good governance and transparency for African leaders with whom they do business.

There is a perception, Swan said, that China is “willing to coddle authoritarian regimes,” for example, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, “whose misrule

and political repression has led to seven consecutive years of economic decline amid egregious human rights conditions.”

The problem, Swan said, is that “this hands-off approach to human rights and democratic governance increasingly puts China at odds with the African consensus that these are important matters.”

Despite the differences between the U.S. and the Chinese approaches in Africa, there is considerable room for cooperation,” he said. “For example, by finding complementarity

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Thurgood Marshall Played Role in Kenyan Independence

Washington -- More than 40 years after his efforts to help Kenya become a constitutional democracy, not many in the United States or abroad are aware that the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall played a role in that country's independence movement.

That, however, is the story Mary Dudziak told participants in a webchat hosted by the State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs February 16. Dudziak, a legal historian who holds a law degree and a doctorate in American studies from Yale University, has written extensively about the impact of foreign affairs on civil rights policy during the Cold War and other topics in 20th century American legal history. She currently is on leave from teaching at the University of Southern California's law school. She also is a contributing author to the State Department's new online publication about the life and work of Thurgood Marshall.

Dudziak told her online correspondents that Marshall, who had a long and distinguished career as a lawyer and judge, was probably best known as one of the team of lawyers who argued in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) that in practice, the concept of "separate but equal" education in the United States was inherently discriminatory against black students; and he was the first African-American Supreme Court justice. Marshall also worked with nationalists in Kenya in the 1960s, she wrote, which was very important to him.

In 1960, Kenya was still a colony of Great Britain. Marshall advised African nationalists who had been elected to serve in the colonial legislature and had been invited to participate in constitutional talks, Dudziak wrote. These legislators

not have the importance he hoped for."

Most Kenyans, Dudziak wrote, are not aware that Marshall played a role in the founding of their government.



Legal historian Mary Dudziak highlights Thurgood Marshall's work with nationalists in Kenya in the 1960s. (USC Law)

principally focused on gaining independence, Dudziak wrote, and used constitutional negotiations as a means of achieving that goal.

Asked how the Kenyan Constitution has withstood the test of time, Dudziak wrote that it "didn't work in the way Marshall would have liked. He imagined strong, independent courts, in an American-style model. In Kenya, power was consolidated in the executive over time, and constitutional rights did

Asked whether Marshall was queried by Kenyans about racism, segregation and the civil rights movement in the United States, Dudziak replied, "Yes -- especially when he returned in July 1963." She said Marshall answered "that there were problems in the United States, but the United States was working to correct them."

For more information on the life and work of Marshall, see the State Department's online publication, *Justice For All: The Legacy of Thurgood Marshall* (<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/tmarshall/index.html>).

For information about civil rights in the United States, see *Civil Rights* (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/civil_rights.html).

To read about African Americans who have made their mark in the United States, see *Americans Celebrate Black History Month* (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/population_and_diversity/african_americans/African_American_History_Month.html).

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Fuel-Efficient Stoves Reduce Risk for People in Sudan Camps

Nearly 2 million Sudanese, driven from their homes by violence, now live in densely populated clusters of camps spread throughout Sudan's western Darfur region.

One of their greatest needs is firewood to cook food (some of which they can sell for income), boil water and heat their homes. But most of Darfur is arid, and aggressive wood harvesting has desolated much of the environment nearby.

In addition, residents -- often women and girls -- who leave the relative safety of the camps to gather wood face the risk of violent attack. In North Darfur, more than 90 percent of families are believed to have at least one female family member who spends eight hours or more a day, five days a week, collecting firewood.

In response, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) began encouraging organized, escorted "firewood patrols" and is working with the African Union and local communities to enhance protection.

USAID also is promoting the production and use of fuel-efficient stoves in Darfur's camps to reduce the need for firewood and the risk involved in gathering it. The U.S.

agency and its local partners are teaching women how to build and use fuel-efficient stoves and pass

fuel. Some stoves need only 20 percent as much fuel as traditional stoves. The stoves also produce



In North Darfur, at least one woman per family spends eight or more hours a day searching for firewood. USAID has helped organize "firewood patrols" and is working with the African Union and local communities to enhance protection. (AP Images)

their skills along to other women in the camps. Fuel-efficient stoves manufactured in camps cost less than \$3 each and are constructed from local materials, including clay, sorghum stems, dung, aluminum and water.

Fuel-efficient stoves can cook the same amount of food in half the time, consuming less than half the

significantly less smoke and ash, reducing health threats to families.

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post-harvest techniques. In addition, USAID has guaranteed nearly \$6 million in new credit over the last 18 months to help coffee cooperatives and agro-processors build their businesses. USAID-funded field activities focus on agricultural

advice for more than 13,700 smallholder growers in Ethiopia on basic agronomic practices to better cultivate and nurture coffee trees. Increased sales of coffee totaling nearly \$1 million have already been reported by five clients. Beyond farm-level assistance, USAID also developed an Internet-based auc-

tion that links Ethiopian farmers directly with specialty coffee buyers in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. ♦

Growing Number of Museums Preserving Black History, Culture

By Louise Fenner
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington - Museums that focus on the critical role of African Americans in U.S. history and culture are more popular than ever, and several cities are planning new or expanded facilities to attract tourists and scholars.

"There's a new generation of [African-American culture] museums that are competitive in size and budget with most mainstream museums – and that's a very new phenomenon," said John Fleming, president of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History.

"The black community is interested in preserving [its] history and culture on a scale that our patrimony deserves," he said. The African-American experience largely was ignored or misrepresented until recent decades, and even now, most students have a poor understanding of important people and events, Fleming told USINFO. "They know who Martin Luther King is, but they don't really understand his significance in American history."

African-American museums attract many visitors, he added. "Cities and states are interested in cultural tourism. You see where they put the Baltimore Afro-American museum [Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture], right on the waterfront, right in the tourist area? And the Birmingham [Alabama] Civil Rights Institute [BCRI] has been a major tourism draw for the city."

BCRI Executive Director Lawrence Pijaux agreed. "We are one of the major destination points for tourism in the state of Alabama," he said.



Volunteer Brunetta Vinson views a Smithsonian Institution exhibit on Martin Luther King Jr. at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit on January 13, 2002. The exhibit "In the Spirit of Martin" is a collection of 120 works by more than 100 artists who have been inspired to carry on King's spirit through their art. (AP Images)

A recent economic impact study found that BCRI visitors spent about \$5.7 million in the Birmingham metropolitan area between July 2002 and July 2003, and that 4 percent of the visitors were from foreign countries.

Birmingham has a civil rights district that includes the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, the site of a 1963 bombing that killed four young girls. The BCRI has a replica of a "Freedom Riders" bus ridden by nonviolent protesters in 1961 to challenge racial segregation. Another exhibit features the door to the jail cell where Martin Luther King Jr. sat in 1963 and wrote his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/Archive/2005/Jun/08-999557.html>)).

There are approximately 200 U.S. museums that focus on the African-American experience and "several projects are on the drawing board,"

said Pijaux, who also heads the Association of African American Museums. Among these are a museum in Atlanta to exhibit the papers of Martin Luther King Jr., the United States National Slavery Museum in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/Archive/2005/Jun/29-569917.html>)).

The old F.W. Woolworth store in Greensboro, North Carolina, is being converted into a museum that will display the "whites only" lunch counter where, in 1960, four black college students launched the sit-in movement to protest segregation.

One of the newest museums is the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, which opened in 2004. It tells the stories of the estimated 100,000 slaves

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Democrats Call for Fundamental Shift in U.S. Trade Policy

By Andrzej Zwaniecki
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Democratic lawmakers say the Bush administration needs to enforce U.S. trade laws more forcefully and negotiate more equitable trade deals to address the huge U.S. trade deficit and protect the welfare of U.S. workers.

During a February 14 hearing, Democratic members of the Ways and Means Committee, joined by some Republicans, expressed frustration over what they perceive as the administration's inability to address the growing U.S. trade deficit and unfair competition from other countries.

Trade numbers released by the Commerce Department a day earlier showed that the U.S. trade deficit of \$764 billion in 2006 hit another record for the fifth year in row.

In a letter to President Bush published February 13, Democratic leaders of the House of Representatives called for a "fundamental shift" in U.S. trade policy to address the deficit and improve U.S. workers' job and wage prospects.

During the hearing, several Republican members of the committee joined their Democratic colleagues in demanding that the administration fight more vigorously to challenge foreign trade barriers and unfair trade practices, bring unfair trade cases to the World Trade Organization (WTO) without hesitation and pursue meaningful trade liberalization opportunities through the Doha round of global trade talks.

U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab testifying before the committee defended the administration's trade record. A common mis-

perception, Schwab said, is blaming unemployment on trade where other factors contribute to the deficit. An actual picture of the benefits



U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab (AP Images)

the United States derives from trade is hidden behind trade deficit numbers, she added.

Schwab said 90 percent of the increase in the deficit represented higher prices of petroleum imports and that U.S. exports grew by nearly 13 percent in 2006 over the previous year. She said that free-trade agreements (FTAs) substantially boost U.S. exports. For example, those to Israel increased 325 percent, to Mexico 223 percent, to Chile 150 percent and to Bahrain 40 percent since FTAs with those countries entered into force.

But several Democrats on the committee, including its chairman, Charles Rangel, said that U.S. trade negotiators must make sure that benefits of trade are shared broadly by incorporating in FTAs strong, enforceable provisions on labor rights based on core international standards.

Schwab said she views FTAs as the "best single vehicle" to further improvements in labor and environmental conditions around the world.

In the countries such as Bahrain, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Oman where FTAs with the United States have entered into force, related labor standards are being enforced and labor conditions have improved, Schwab said.

She said U.S. negotiators have been working hard to put solid labor and environmental provisions into FTAs.

Rangel interjected that in the future, negotiators probably will have to work even harder.

Democrats have pressured the administration to include stronger worker protection provisions in the FTAs with Colombia and Peru that already have been signed and in the Panama FTA that has been finalized but not signed yet.

Schwab said the administration believes this can be done without formally renegotiating the pacts, but she acknowledged there is still a "substantial disagreement" between the administration's position and Democrats' stance on how to handle those issues.

She pledged to work with Congress on bridging the gap.

Experts say that language on such labor standards as the right to associate and to bargain collectively, prohibitions on child labor and forced labor, and employment non-discrimination is likely to be included in any legislation to renew trade promotion authority (TPA).

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TPA, also known as “fast track,” gives the U.S. president the power to submit trade deals to the House of Representatives and Senate for up-or-down votes without amendments. It also defines objectives that U.S. negotiators must strive for when they negotiate FTAs. President Bush recently requested the renewal of the TPA, which expires in July. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=January&x=20070131160754FJreffahcS0.9970667>).

Schwab said that current and future presidents will need TPA to negotiate regional and bilateral agreements because few countries will negotiate with the United States without it.

A few days prior to her appearance before the committee, she said that failure to renew TPA would “signal to the world that the United States has lost faith in Doha.”

But at the hearings she reacted coolly to the idea of a one-year extension of TPA supported by the U.S. business community. She said any extension should accommodate

not only a possible Doha deal but also other types of future trade agreements.

For additional information on U.S. trade policy see USA and WTO (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/WTO.html), and the eJournal USA Benefits of Trade, Costs of Protectionism (<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/ites/0107/ijee/ijee0107.htm>).

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who escaped via the “underground railway,” a loose network of clandestine routes and safe havens provided by abolitionists, freed slaves and other sympathizers.

Among the exhibits is an unheated pen where slaves were chained and held before being shipped off for auction. “If the market [for slaves] was down, they would be kept here for months,” according to Carl Westmoreland, a senior adviser to the museum and the grandson of slaves. In a television interview, he said he wept when he first saw the slave pen.

Visiting a museum that displays slave shackles and whips or photographs of lynchings “can be very difficult and emotional,” Fleming acknowledged. “But that doesn’t mean that we should not preserve them.” It is important, he said, to “continue to tell the story.”

Not all African-American museums focus primarily on slavery or civil rights. Museums in Dallas and New Orleans, among others, are dedicated to African-American art and culture, and Kansas City, Missouri, has the American Jazz Museum. Fleming helped develop the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center in Wilberforce, Ohio, which created an exhibit that traced African dance over 400 years.

“People assume the Lindy Hop and the Charleston were created by white choreographers,” he said, but these and many other popular dances sprang out of African-American communities.

In New York, the Museum for African Art is being expanded and moved to a new home where it will be “a cultural gateway to Harlem,” according to Mayor Michael Bloomberg. The new museum in Washington, which will take several years to develop, is going to “cover

the breadth of experience from African origins down to the present,” Fleming said.

These museums are not just aimed at an African-American audience, they are for everyone, he stressed. They create the opportunity “to really understand the history of black people in this country ... and how we have contributed to the development of this country.”

Additional information (<http://www.blackmuseums.org/>) on these and other museums is available on the Web site of the Association of African American Museums.

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North Korea Nuclear Deal Seen Strengthening U.S.-China Ties

By Vince Crawley
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The six-party agreement to end North Korea's nuclear program was the result of multilateral cooperation and has strengthened the diplomatic relationship between the United States and China, the top U.S. negotiator says.

"This whole six-party process has done more to bring the U.S. and China together than any other process I'm aware of," Ambassador Christopher Hill said in a February 20 interview with ABC News, an American television network. Hill is assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs.

The agreement, announced in Beijing February 13 by diplomats from China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, North Korea and the United States, calls on North Korea to shut down its main nuclear reactor complex at Yongbyon and allow international inspectors to verify the process as a first step toward disclosing and dismantling its entire nuclear infrastructure. In exchange, North Korea will receive international economic, humanitarian and energy assistance. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=February&x=20070213150224esnamfuak0.8298456>).)

Under the terms of the deal, North Korea has agreed to shut down its reactors and begin international inspections within 60 days. "We'd like to move right into the next phase on day 61," Hill said.

During this second phase, "we would hope to get these reactors disabled, meaning they can't pull them back up online," Hill said. "Then, beyond that, we would look

for a phase that dismantles."

During the first 60-day phase, Hill said, "we will be discussing a list

The new agreement also attempts to "address some of the underlying problems in the region" instead of



L-R: Japan's chief negotiator Kenichiro Sasae, South Korea's Chun Yung-woo, North Korea's Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan, China's envoy Wu Dawei, US envoy Christopher Hill and Russia's Alexander Losyukov hold hands before the closing ceremony of the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program in Beijing. (Photo AFP)

which is aimed at eventually getting a declaration from North Koreans on precisely what they've got in terms of nuclear programs. Because, ultimately, we do need to get these 50 or so kilos [of plutonium] already produced, we need to get those under international supervision and out of there."

Hill said the new agreement differs from the 1994 Agreed Framework, which offered U.S. assistance in exchange for an agreement by North Korea not to pursue nuclear enrichment. The 1994 agreement was between the United States and North Korea, whereas the new agreement "is a multilateral deal" that also includes China, Japan, Russia and South Korea, Hill said. "I think that fundamentally is different," he said.

focusing exclusively on the North Korean nuclear program, Hill said. "So it's a more comprehensive, holistic approach."

For example, the United States has insisted that North Korea meet with Japan to address mutual concerns, such as North Korea's past abduction of Japanese citizens.

For more information on U.S. policy, see The U.S. and the Korean Peninsula (http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/east_asia_pacific/north_korea.html).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site:

<http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Bush Calls for Flexibility in Human Intelligence Gathering

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- President Bush, presiding over the swearing-in of retired Vice Admiral Mike McConnell as the new director of national intelligence, called for more flexibility in the use of personnel with foreign backgrounds to gather critical intelligence in the war on terrorism.

"In this time of war -- and we are a nation at war -- the president and his national security team must have the best intelligence about the plans and purpose of the enemy," Bush said during the ceremony at Bolling Air Force Base February 20.

To that end, Bush said he asked McConnell to ensure that U.S. intelligence agencies "focus on bringing in more Americans with language skills and cultural awareness necessary to meet the threats of this new century."

McConnell responded by pledging, "We will revamp security and work force policies of the past. Our nation requires that we have the best and brightest of our citizens in our ranks to fight a very different enemy" from that encountered in World War II or even the Cold War.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates, CIA Director Michael Hayden and FBI Director Bob Mueller also attended the ceremony.

Before retiring from the Navy to work in the private sector, McConnell served as director of intelligence for the Joint Chiefs of Staff during Operation Desert Storm, and later as the director of the National Security Agency.

Bush said McConnell will make a good overall director of intelligence

because "he understands that the enemy uses the tools of our modern economy -- from rapid transportation, to instant communications, to global finance -- to spread their extremist ideology, and facilitate new attacks."



President George W. Bush stands with Director of National Intelligence J. Michael "Mike" McConnell during his ceremonial swearing-in February 20, 2007 at Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, D.C., taking his oath from White House Chief of Staff Josh Bolten, as McConnell's wife, Terry, holds the Bible. (White House photo)

As the new head of the U.S. government's 16 intelligence agencies, McConnell said he gladly accepted the challenge of strengthening and reforming the intelligence community.

Especially important now, he said, is that "the rise of globalization, rapid transportation, global connectivity, and ever advancing technology -- have made us more vulnerable to threats such as terrorism."

McConnell said, "The time needed to develop a terrorist plot, communicated around the globe, and put it into motion has been drastically reduced. The time line is no longer

a calendar, it is a watch."

With that in mind, McConnell pledged "to focus on our people, our policies, our collection, our technology, our analysis, and our operational results in a way that

provides accountability to you [President Bush], the Congress, and the American people."

Old policies "have hampered some common sense reforms, such as hiring first and second generation Americans who possess native language skills, cultural insights, and a keen understanding of the threats we face."

But now, "We must create an acquisition environment in this community that will continue to make American intelligence the most effective in the world," he concluded.

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Rice Calls Meeting with Israeli, Palestinian Leaders Productive

By Ralph Dannheisser
USINFO Special Correspondent

Washington -- A three-way meeting in Jerusalem with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas was "useful and productive" in paving the way for further efforts toward an Israeli-Palestinian peace, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says.

In a brief statement delivered after the February 19 meeting she had characterized in advance as "informal discussions" rather than negotiations, Rice said the three participants "affirmed our commitment to a two-state solution, agreed that a Palestinian state cannot be born of violence and terror, and reiterated our acceptance of previous agreements and obligations," including the road map to Middle East peace.

And, she said, Olmert and Abbas had discussed how to move forward on mutual obligations aimed at implementing the first phase of the road map. (See text of document (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2004/Feb/04-725518.html>).)

Rice said the two had agreed to meet again soon, and "reiterated their desire for American participation and leadership in facilitating efforts to overcome obstacles, rally regional and international support, and move forward toward peace."

Accordingly, she said, she would be returning to the region soon herself.

The tripartite meeting, which lasted about two hours, followed a round of separate meetings that Rice held

with Olmert and Abbas.

Her trip to the region was scheduled before Abbas and officials of Hamas agreed, at meetings held earlier in February in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, to share power in a new Palestinian coalition government in

Rice addressed the issue in her brief statement, saying Abbas and Olmert "also discussed issues arising from the agreement for the formation of a Palestinian national unity government."

She did not reveal the substance of



(L-R) Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert shake hands during a summit in Jerusalem. (AFP/Awad Awad)

an effort to end months of factional violence.

That agreement affected the climate for the Jerusalem discussions because Hamas has not accepted the principles of the Quartet for Middle East peace -- that any Palestinian government must be committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including ones regarding the road map.

The Quartet is comprised of the European Union, Russia, the United Nations and the United States.

those discussions, however.

A separate statement issued by the three leaders carried virtually identical language.

Both statements also noted that Olmert and Abbas "discussed their views of the diplomatic and political horizon and how it might unfold toward the two state vision of President Bush," and that all parties "called for respecting the ceasefire declared in November."

Rice had been asked in a series of interviews held before her meetings with Olmert and Abbas whether it

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might not have been better to postpone her new peace initiative until a Palestinian government was in place.

She rejected that approach, declaring in an interview with the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz that while "this is a complicated time ... if I waited for an uncomplicated time in the Middle East, I'm not sure I would ever get on an airplane."

Rice acknowledged that progress could be slow.

"I'm not going to ask anyone to run when we really need to walk for a while," she said in the interview. "I think if we ask everybody to run, somebody is going to fall down. So let's just take this one step at a time."

In a separate roundtable session held with print journalists after her one-on-one meeting with Abbas February 18, Rice stressed that the United States will continue to work with him while the shape of a prospective Palestinian government becomes clear.

"I think that we can continue to work with Abu Mazen [Abbas], continue to discuss with Abu Mazen, continue to explore with Abu Mazen. That said, the best circumstance, of course, would be a Palestinian unity government that recognized the Quartet principles. But he has his own authority and he accepts the Quartet principles," the secretary said.

Ultimately, she made clear, "if there's going to be a Palestinian state, then the Quartet principles would obviously have to be recognized because ... this is the foundation for peace. How can you have a two-state solution if one state isn't -- its existence isn't recognized? How can you have a two-state solution and a roadmap to peace if you don't renounce violence?"

But the secretary stressed that the United States could not fairly assess the new Palestinian government until it is actually formed. "We are going to withhold judgment on what happened at Mecca until we see what actually comes of it, and I think that's only fair," she said.

The Ha'aretz interviewer turned Rice's attention to Iran, quoting

concerns that that nation is emulating Nazi Germany in 1938.

She responded, "[T]he one thing that we do know is that when the international community does not come together early to address aggressive behavior, that it never turns out well. And that's why it is important to address Iranian behavior now, not later." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=February&x=20070214171942esnamfuak0.7028467>).)

Rice is scheduled to proceed to Berlin for meetings with other Quartet participants to assess the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

For more information on U.S. policy, see *The Middle East: A Vision for the Future* (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/me_vision.html).

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U.S. Official Dispels "Alarmist Views" of China in Africa . . .

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in our aid programs, continuing support for peacekeeping operations and looking for opportunities to collaborate in the health sector."

The Chinese also have come closer to U.S. policy regarding controversial issues such as Darfur, Swan said. For example, China recently endorsed the United Nations' three-

phase program for deploying a peacekeeping force in the province and have shown interest in helping "convince the Sudanese government to accept it."

The hope now, Swan told his audience, is that the Chinese "will keep pressing the Sudanese on this [Darfur] issue."

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U.S., World Community Focus on Strengthening Internet Freedom

By Eric Green
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States and the world community increasingly are addressing the complex issue of free access to the Internet and governments that seek to restrict its use in spreading human rights and democracy.

To heighten attention to the issue, the U.S. State Department held a January 30 conference on Internet freedom held under the auspices of the department's Global Internet Freedom Task Force. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice established the task force in February 2006, with one of its goals addressing the practice by repressive regimes of restricting the flow of information on the Internet.

The conference brought together State Department officials, representatives from the corporate world and human rights organizations, leaders from the high-profile Yahoo and Google Internet-based services companies, and the Microsoft software corporation.

State Department official Jeffrey Krilla, a participant in the conference, told USINFO February 8 that the eclectic group of participants meant the airing of a wide variety of views on how to combat Internet censorship.

Krilla, deputy assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights, and labor, said his bureau recently set aside \$500,000 from its "Human Rights and Democracy Fund" to support global Internet freedom projects. In addition, the Department's next edition of its

annual country reports on human rights practices will have an expanded section about freedom of speech on the Internet. That report will be released "in the next month or so," Krilla indicated.

That expanded section about the Internet, said Krilla, stems from the



fact that U.S. officials are increasingly focused on repressive regimes around the world that violate international standards on freedom of expression by punishing individuals or groups who use cybertechnology to dissent peacefully from official policy.

Paula Dobriansky, the State Department's under secretary of state for democracy and global affairs, released a statement at the conference saying the Department is increasing its monitoring of challenges to Internet freedom by countries around the world.

The State Department says expanding access to the Internet is a key part of the overall U.S. government strategy to increase Internet freedom. This is accomplished through

programs such as the public-private Digital Freedom Initiative. That initiative has worked with such companies as Intel, Cisco, Motorola, Voxiva and Hewlett-Packard to support the government of Peru's efforts to spread Internet use to more than 1,000 rural locations in the South American nation.

The department's January 30 conference was divided into two panel discussions -- one on the effect of Internet censorship, and another on "Internet freedom" -- shorthand for what the Department defines as "freedom of expression and the free flow of information" online.

A PRIVATE-SECTOR VIEW-POINT

One conference participant, Alexis Krajeski, an analyst for governance and sustainable development at the London-based F&C asset management company, told USINFO February 14 that "it's a mad, mad world" regarding the Internet because of its current "highly unregulated" situation.

Such lack of regulation, she said, inspires questions as to what is considered appropriate free speech online, and how to protect customer privacy from "identity thieves" and "underground agents" who try to steal social security and credit card numbers for illicit and harmful purposes.

Krajeski, who works in her firm's Boston office, said she found the State Department conference useful because it raised a key question on what should be the "appropriate role" for the U.S. government to

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Laura Bush Praises Private Sector Efforts To Fight Malaria

By Cheryl Pellerin
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- First lady Laura Bush joined officials from government and the private sector February 15 to examine the role of faith-based and community nongovernmental organizations in controlling malaria in Africa.

The "Compassion in Action Roundtable" was convened by the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

"In many African villages," Bush said, "churches are the only formal institutions that can manage malaria control and prevention. In malaria-prone regions, people look first to their churches, mosques or synagogues for help. They trust their pastors to provide it."

Roundtable participants included Ambassador Randall Tobias, U.S. global AIDS coordinator; Timothy Ziemer, coordinator of the President's Malaria Initiative; Jay Hein, director of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives; John DeGioia, president of Georgetown University; and John Bridgeland, chief executive officer of Malaria No More.

Malaria is a mosquito-borne disease caused by the one-celled *Plasmodium falciparum* parasite and three closely related species. Each parasite lives part of its life in people and part in mosquitoes. The disease is transmitted to people in the bite of an *Anopheles* mosquito and can result in severe headache, high fever, chills, vomiting and death.

Each year 350 million to 500 million cases of malaria occur worldwide, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC), and more than 1 million people die, most of them young children in sub-Saharan Africa. But the disease can be prevented and cured. Bed nets, insecticides and anti-malarial drugs are effective tools to fight malaria in areas where it is transmitted.



First lady Laura Bush addresses a Washington forum on controlling malaria in Africa February 15. (White House photo)

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EFFORTS

The President's Malaria Initiative is a \$1.2 billion, five-year initiative to control malaria in Africa and reduce malaria-related deaths by 50 percent in 15 countries by achieving 85 percent coverage of proven preventive and curative interventions.

President Bush announced the initiative in June 2005. It is a collaborative effort led by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in conjunction with the Department of Health and Human Services, the CDC, the Department

of State, the White House and others.

"Aid from American taxpayers has reached more than 6 million Africans," the first lady said. "This year, 30 million more will receive lifesaving medicines, sprays and nets as the program expands. The malaria initiative also calls on developed countries, private foundations and volunteer groups to help reduce suffering and death caused by this disease."

In his January 23 State of the Union address, President Bush called for Congress to provide more funding to fight malaria, and at the White House Summit on Malaria in December, Laura Bush announced the creation of the Malaria Communities Program, a \$30 million initiative to provide grants to African and American nongovernmental organizations and civic and religious groups to support their malaria control efforts.

"Private sector institutions bring a fresh perspective and a personal touch to the fight against malaria," she said, "especially our community and faith-based organizations. In the United States, religious groups can enlist millions of volunteers and donors with their message of compassion and hope."

STRATEGIC COMPASSION

By working with the President's Malaria Initiative, Bush said, relief organizations, businesses, philanthropies, churches and nongovernmental organizations can expand their efforts and save more lives.

"We've already seen the benefits of

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Laura Bush Praises Private Sector Efforts To Fight Malaria . . .

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this coordination," she added.

In Tanzania, for example, the government's malaria program subsidizes bed net vouchers for pregnant women. And through a partnership between the President's Malaria Initiative and Mennonite Economic Development Associates, the programs will be expanded to cover all of Tanzania's children.

Since the program was launched in late November, it has supplied nets to protect nearly 390,000 infants, and it will reach another 1.5 million babies every year.

In southern Angola, the President's Malaria Initiative recently joined with the government to launch a residential mosquito-spraying program.

The President's Malaria Initiative "supplied the insecticide sprays," Bush said, "but it was the Christian Children's Fund [CCF] that conducted all of the community education programs. CCF spread throughout rural Angola, teaching residents how mosquito sprays can save them and their children from malaria."

CCF workers explained how spraying campaigns are conducted and taught residents to prepare their homes by moving their furniture

away from the walls.

Thanks to the coordination between the President's Malaria Initiative and the Christian Children's Fund, she said, 90 percent of the targeted families opened their homes to the spray, and more than 500,000 people were protected from malaria.

For more information on U.S. policies, see Health (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/health.html).

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U.S., World Community Focus on Strengthening Internet Freedom . . .

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play regarding online access and Internet free speech. The issue, she added, intertwines ensuring national security and protecting personal privacy.

Krajeski is co-author of her company's new report on how technology, media and telecommunications companies can best meet the challenges of allowing users in the new digital age access to information while safeguarding their security and privacy. The report, entitled *Managing Access, Security & Privacy in the Global Digital Economy*, also recommends "principles of good practice" for dealing with access, security and privacy concerns, warning that new technology is being used to track political dissidents and to silence free speech.

IMPRISONMENT OF CYBERDISSIDENTS

The Paris-based press freedom advocacy group, Reporters Without Borders, released a report February 1 that said 60 people around the world currently are imprisoned for posting criticism of governments online.

The report said China, with 50 people in jail, is by far the world's "worst prison" for cyberdissidents. Four other such dissidents are in jail in Vietnam, three in Syria and one each in Tunisia, Libya and Iran.

Internet users are developing new solutions to fight back against dictatorial regimes by creating new technology, encrypting their e-mail, and through other tools that are still not detected by law enforcement entities monitoring the Internet, said Reporters Without Borders. How-

ever, China and other repressive regimes are said to "filter" out Web sites that they consider overcritical and threatening to their policies.

The full text (http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=20839) of the Reporters Without Borders report is available on the group's Web site. The full text (<http://www.fandc.com/governance/asp>) (PDF, 281KB) of the F&C report is available on the firm's Web site.

The 2005 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/index.htm>) and information on the Digital Freedom Initiative (<http://www.dfi.gov/>) are available on the State Department Web site.

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<http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

First Large-Scale HIV Vaccine Trial in South Africa Opens

By Cheryl Pellerin
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – A large-scale clinical trial of a potential HIV vaccine has opened in South Africa. The study plans to enroll up to 3,000 HIV-negative men and women, making it the largest African HIV vaccine trial to date.

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), is supporting the trial, which is being conducted jointly by the South African AIDS Vaccine Initiative and the HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN).

“Our best hope of ending the AIDS epidemic is a safe and effective vaccine,” said NIH Director Dr. Elias Zerhouni in a February 8 statement. “To achieve that goal requires the concerted effort of governments, scientists and private industry as well as participation by well-informed volunteers.”

The vaccine has shown promise in smaller studies in the United States and elsewhere. The U.S. pharmaceutical firm Merck & Co. is providing the vaccine, which contains copies of only three HIV genes, not the whole virus, so it cannot infect volunteers with the disease.

MOVING FORWARD

In South Africa, the trial is called Phambili, which means “moving forward.” Also called HVTN 503, it is a test-of-concept trial, the first such vaccine study in South Africa.

This kind of trial is designed to tell researchers whether the vaccine has the potential to protect against contracting HIV so they can decide whether to conduct a larger

“efficacy,” or effectiveness, trial that could make it possible for the vaccine to be licensed for public use.

“This international partnership exemplifies the model of collaboration needed to defeat HIV/AIDS,” said NIAID Director Dr. Anthony Fauci.



In smaller trials, the vaccine was found to be safe and to stimulate cellular immune responses against HIV in more than half of volunteers. More than 1,800 people have received at least one injection.

In 2005, the first test-of-concept trial of the vaccine opened at sites in the United States, Canada, South America, Australia and the Caribbean – areas where a subtype of HIV called clade B predominates. That trial is ongoing.

A clade is a group of genetically related forms of HIV. Clades also are called genetic subtypes and usually have geographic distribution

patterns. For example, HIV clades A and D are most common in East Africa, clade B is found in North America and Europe, and clade C is prevalent in South Africa.

As in the 2005 study, the main objectives of HVTN 503 are to determine whether the vaccine can prevent HIV infection or, in those who become infected, lower the amount of HIV in the blood early in the infection process.

The new trial also will determine if the vaccine, based on clade B, potentially could protect against the clade C HIV subtype.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Leading the trial in South Africa is Glenda Gray of the Perinatal HIV Research Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand, based at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto. Dr. James Kublin of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle is study co-chair.

The study will recruit volunteers at five sites in South Africa – in Soweto, Cape Town, Klerksdorp, Medunsa and Durban. Gray said the study team has sought critical community endorsement of and support for the clinical trial.

“Our communities here in South Africa are faced with the burden of HIV on a daily basis,” Gray said, “and the trial investigators and study team have spent years developing a rapport with the community so that together we can move forward in our quest to identify improved approaches to prevent new HIV infections.”

Community members serve on advisory boards associated with sites

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Egypt Reports More Avian Influenza Infections and One Death

By Cheryl Pellerin
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Two more people in Egypt have been infected with the highly pathogenic form of avian influenza and one of them has died, as experts meeting at the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva report progress in developing pandemic influenza vaccines.

The Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population announced a new case of human avian influenza virus infection February 19. The 5-year-old boy from Sharkia governorate, about 96 kilometers northeast of Cairo, was admitted to the hospital with symptoms February 14 and his condition is stable, according to WHO.

The boy was exposed to sick birds a week before he became ill. Those who have had contact with the boy are healthy and under observation. Egypt has reported 22 human cases of avian influenza since March 2006.

On February 16, the ministry announced the nation's 13th avian influenza death, a 37-year-old woman from Fayyoun governorate, about 96 kilometers south of Cairo, who was helping slaughter and defeather sick birds a week before she became ill. She was admitted to the hospital February 12.

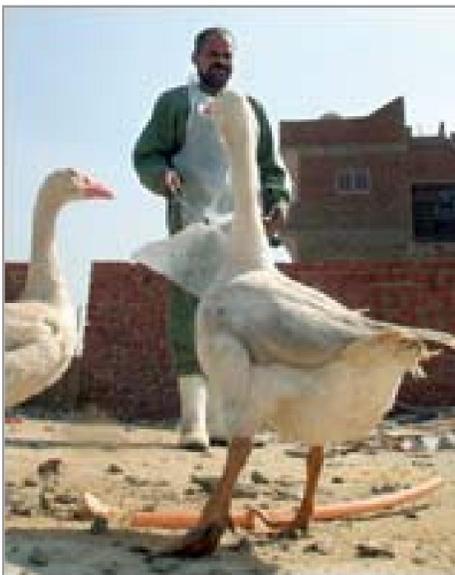
Both cases were confirmed by the Egyptian Central Public Health Laboratory and U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit No. 3 in Cairo.

PANDEMIC VACCINE PROGRESS

More than 100 influenza vaccine experts from around the world met February 15-16 at WHO in Geneva to discuss advances in pandemic

influenza vaccine development.

According to WHO, 16 manufacturers from 10 countries are developing prototype pandemic influenza vaccines against the H5N1 avian influenza virus. Five manufacturers also are developing vaccines against other avian viruses.



A health worker disinfects a farm at the town of Qalyoub north of Cairo, Egypt. (File photo AP Images)

More than 40 clinical trials are complete or ongoing. Most have focused on healthy adults, but some companies, after completing safety analyses in adults, have initiated clinical trials using older people and children.

Results presented at the meeting showed for the first time that vaccination with newly developed avian flu vaccines can stimulate potentially protective immune responses against strains of H5N1 virus found in different geographical locations.

This was the third such meeting in two years to review progress in developing candidate vaccines against

pandemic flu viruses and reach consensus on future priority activities. The experts presented information about and discussed more than 20 projects.

BUILDING CAPACITY

Despite the progress, the world still lacks the manufacturing capacity to meet potential global pandemic influenza vaccine demand, since current capacity is estimated at less than 400 million doses per year of seasonal influenza vaccine.

In response, in 2006, WHO launched the Global Pandemic Influenza Action Plan to increase vaccine supply, a \$10-billion, 10-year effort to help developing countries establish their own flu vaccine production facilities through technology transfer.

As a supporting partner in the action plan, the United States has contributed \$10 million to building sustainable vaccine production capacity in developing countries, said Daniel Singer, M.D., senior medical policy adviser for the State Department Avian Influenza Action Group, on assignment from the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Global Health Affairs, in a recent USINFO interview.

"At the time a pandemic starts, there won't be enough vaccine for anybody," Singer said, "so the best thing to do is to get as much vaccine production capacity as we can out there because it will reduce the amount of deficit, essentially, that we're facing in that situation." WHO is working with several vaccine producers, mainly in developing countries affected by H5N1, to help establish in-country influenza vaccine production.

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**PUBLIC AFFAIRS
SECTION
AMERICAN EMBASSY**

P.O.Box 1014
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Phone: 251-1-174007
251-1-174000
Fax: 251-1-242454
Email: pasaddis@state.gov



First Large-Scale HIV Vaccine Trial in South Africa . .

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participating in the study. Advisory board members have access to general data on vaccine immune responses and safety.

The South African Medicines Control Council, the South African Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration have reviewed the trial.

THE CLINICAL TRIAL

Before proceeding to full enrollment (3,000 volunteers), researchers will assess the first several hundred volunteers to make sure the vaccine induces immune responses against the clade C virus.

Study volunteers must be healthy, sexually active, HIV-negative men and women 18 to 35 years old. Investigators will assign them at random to receive either the test vaccine or an inactive injection, called a

placebo.

Volunteers will be counseled regularly about how to reduce their risk of getting HIV, and they will receive condoms and access to treatment for sexually transmitted infections. After completing the series of vaccinations, participants will be tested for HIV infection every six months for the rest of the four-year trial.

More information (<http://www.hvtn.org/>) is available on the Web site of the HIV Vaccine Trials Network.

For additional information about U.S. and international efforts to fight the disease, see HIV/AIDS (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/hiv_aids.html).

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SHARING AVIAN FLU VIRUSES

Siti Fadillah Supari, Indonesia's minister of health, and David Heymann, M.D., WHO acting assistant director-general for communicable diseases, released a statement February 16 agreeing that Indonesia would again share avian flu viruses with the WHO Network of Collaborating Centers for Influenza.

Researchers need access to H5N1 strains to develop pandemic vaccines, monitor the virus's evolution and track the global spread of the disease.

Indonesia -- a nation of more than 17,000 islands in the southeast Asian archipelago that has confirmed 81 human cases of avian

flu, 63 of them fatal -- announced February 6 that it would stop sharing its H5N1 samples with WHO because it was unfair for other countries to use the samples to develop vaccines that poorer nations could not afford to buy.

"Indonesia's leadership alerted the international community to the needs of developing countries to benefit from sharing virus samples, including access to quality pandemic vaccines at affordable prices," the statement read.

In the short term, Indonesia will pursue discussions with vaccine production companies to meet its vaccine needs. In the long term, Indonesia will work with WHO to develop its local vaccine production capacity through technology transfer.

In the statement, WHO agreed to work with the Ministry of Health and other countries to assess and develop mechanisms for promoting equitable distribution and availability of pandemic flu vaccines developed and produced from the viruses.

For more information on U.S. and international efforts to combat avian influenza, see Bird Flu (Avian Influenza) (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html).

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