



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter Speaks to Journalists

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter held a press conference with Minister of Health Te-wodros Adhanom on Tuesday, February 13 in Addis Ababa. President Carter had just returned from a visit to Afeta, a community of 7,500 people in the Jimma Zone, where he distributed long-lasting insecticide-impregnated bed nets. The symbolic action was part of a new malaria control initiative in Ethiopia by the Carter Center. Malaria is Ethiopia's single largest cause of death.



President Jimmy Carter (L) at the joint press conference and Minister of Health Dr. Tewodros Adhanom

"Malaria preys on Ethiopia's youth, destroying lives and jeopardizing the country's future," said President Carter. "It is our goal to help provide long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets, (Continued on page 2)

"Landmarks of New York" Photo Exhibition Opens in King Fasil Palace in Gondar



Guests at the photo exhibition opening ceremony

The photo exhibition "Landmarks of New York" opened in King Fasilidas Palace in Gondar in Amhara Region on February 8, 2007. Over 150 people attended the opening event including the Deputy Zone Administrator Ato Semahegne Woldegibriel, the mayor of Gondar, Muslim and Christian religious leaders, businessmen, government officials, university administrators, school principals and students. DCM Janet Wilgus welcomed the guests. Following this, (Continued on page 2)

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Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter Speaks to Journalists . . .

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free of charge, to all members of at-risk communities to help put a stop to the needless deaths caused by this mosquito-transmitted disease."

To help the Ethiopia Ministry of Health in its goal to protect 50 million Ethiopians at risk for malaria with long-lasting insecticide-treated nets by July 2007, The Carter Center purchased 3 million bed nets to contribute to the total 20 million bed nets that are needed to accomplish this goal. The Carter Center will assist in the distribution of nets and in health education programs to help protect 18 million men, women, and children in more than 100 districts (woredas) and several hundred Kebeles in malaria-prone

areas. Distribution of these long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets began in January 2007. The same community-based networks which were established for river blindness and trachoma control programs in Ethiopia funded through The Carter Center are being used for the malaria control initiative.

The Carter Center's work in Ethiopia has been extremely diverse, involving disease control and eradication programs for river blindness and trachoma, agriculture and food security development programs, conflict mediation, health education and training, elections monitoring, and the promotion of human rights. During his visit, to Ethiopia President Carter also attended a conference of the Ethiopian Public Health

Training Initiative in Addis Ababa. This conference was held to illustrate the outstanding effect the program has had in helping Ethiopia meet its growing need for trained health care workers.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Ethiopia has supported the Carter Center with \$12 million in funding for the Ethiopian Public Health Training Initiative, which has trained health care professionals such as Health Extension Workers, laboratory technicians, nurses, and environmental sanitation experts. USAID also worked with the Carter Center in their response to the 2006 flood emergency in Ethiopia. ♦

"Landmarks of New York" Photo Exhibition Opens in King Fasil

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Dr. Joetta Brown, former US exchange professor at Haramaya University, presented a personal view of New York City. Cultural Affairs Specialist Yohannes Birhanu explained the four projects which the U.S. Embassy has assisted through the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP). Cultural Affairs Officer Patricia Johnson discussed the recent history of the cultural preservation in the US. Deputy Zone Administrator welcomed the guests and thanked the Embassy for bringing an exhibit to Gondar. The remarks were translated into the Amharic language.

DCM Wilgus also presented Ethiopian/American friendship book bags to eight representative students from elementary schools in Gondar. On the following day,

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DCM Wilgus with representative students holding their book bags

Embassy Staff Lead Discussion on Rosa Parks for Black History Month to Student Groups

Mission staff have shown the video "Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa Parks" to students at high schools in Addis Ababa and Gondar University in Gondar. On February 8 Cultural Affairs Officer gave a brief introduction to the American civil rights movement and showed the video to approximately 800 students from the Health Science and Management Science faculties at Gondar University. On February 10 Public Affairs Section staff showed the video to the English discussion group from Yekatit 12 Senior Secondary School in Addis Ababa and led a discussion on the American civil rights movement. On February 13 Embassy Management Officer showed the video to students at Cathedral Nativity Girls School and led a discussion on civil rights and non violence. On February 15 an Embassy Political Officer showed the video to students at Nazareth School. Schools were presented with a book and posters on Rosa Parks for their schools. Presenters to high school students treated the sessions as opportunities for English lessons as well as civic education



Students at Cathedral School watch the Rosa Parks video.

lessons. Students participating in the discussions received Ethiopian-American friendship pens.

Students learned about Rosa Parks' role in the American civil rights movement. They also saw how the movement espoused the non-violence rhetoric of Rev. Martin

Luther King, Jr. and was able to prevail. The video and document provided exposure to American democratic values and the importance of non-violent action. In addition, students had exposure to Americans and American English, and at the same time, had a chance to express themselves in English. ♦

"Landmarks of New York" Photo Exhibition Opens in King Fasil

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twenty book bags were presented to principals of each of the 44 elementary schools in Gondar for distribution to their students in a manner of their choosing.

Gondar has been designated a World Heritage site for the King Fasilidas palace complex. Viewers of the exhibit were pleased to see the variety of "landmarks" that had been protected and preserved in New York, presented in Gondar's own "landmark." On the following

day government officials were already meeting to plan their own "Landmarks of Gondar" exhibit to share with fellow Ethiopians and the world.

In the evening following the opening, Cultural Affairs Specialist met one of the Muslim leaders who had been invited to the event. The Muslim leader expressed appreciation for the invitation and noted that it was the first time the Muslim community had been invited to events such as the opening in such

numbers, and he was grateful to the US Embassy for its consideration.

The Bureau of Culture had arranged for school children to visit the photo exhibition for its duration (to February 14), exposing thousands of school children to the photos of New York and their own cultural heritage. The exhibition was widely-covered in the local and national media. ♦

U.S. Official Pledges Immediate Help for Somalia Stabilization

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States is prepared to provide immediate support for the deployment of an African stabilization force in Somalia following the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops who helped Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) wrest control of the country from radical Islamists, says U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Jendayi Frazer.

On February 6, Frazer told the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs that Somalia was facing some "decisive moments" in a turbulent history beset by 16 years of internal conflict.

After a jihadist force called the Council on Islamic Courts (CIC) gained control of most of Somalia in summer 2006, the TFG, with the help of Ethiopian troops, launched a counteroffensive in December 2006 that drove CIC troops out of most of the country, including the capital Mogadishu.

With the CIC on the run, Frazer told the senators, it is essential that the TFG reach out as soon as possible to all Somalis to start "an inclusive process of dialogue and reconciliation" toward constructing a true government of national unity.

Following the Ethiopian withdrawal, Frazer said, "Rapid deployment of an African stabilization force in Somalia will help create a secure environment in which this political process can move forward and will help instill confidence in the Somali people that the peace process is moving forward."

Asked by Subcommittee Chairman Russell Feingold about the status of

the Ethiopian forces in Somalia, Frazer said they had started their withdrawal in January but it was not yet complete. "It's not my sense that most of the troops have been withdrawn at this point," she stated.

Frazer, who is assistant secretary of state for African affairs, said that after the United Nations and the African Union (AU) authorized a



Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer testifies at a Senate subcommittee hearing on Somalia. (File photo AP Images)

stabilization force of up to 8,000 African troops for Somalia in January, the United States is "actively supporting the deployment of this force" and so far about 4,000 troops have been committed by various African nations. Uganda was first, she said, and volunteered 1,500 troops for the Somali stabilization effort. The United States will follow up with "support with strategic transportation [airlift], equipment and other logistics."

This means immediate aid of \$2 million for transport and \$8 million for equipment for the Ugandan soldiers, she said.

"With our help, and following approval by the Ugandan Parliament, we anticipate that the Ugandans can deploy to Somalia as early as this week [February 5-9]," Frazer

said.

The official added that Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's offer of troops was followed by offers from other countries, including Ghana, Nigeria and Burundi.

Following the victory of TFG forces, the United States pledged \$40.5 million in new aid to Somalia including \$24 million for peacekeeping and economic development.

In the fiscal 2008 budget proposal to Congress, the Bush administration is requesting an additional \$60 million for Somalia that includes \$40 million for peacekeeping and \$20 million for humanitarian assistance.

The later is especially important, said U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Assistant Administrator Michael Hess because of natural disasters that threaten to increase the misery of many Somalis already displaced by the recent conflict.

Extreme flooding now threatens to compound the misery caused by a disastrous drought in 2006, Hess told the Senate panel. Fortunately, the food aid "pipeline is in good shape now ... and the acute food crisis has dropped by half," he told the Senate panel.

Already in 2007, Hess said the United States has provided "nearly \$16 million to mitigate the impact of drought, floods, conflict and resulting displacement within Somalia and across its borders." That was on top of the \$92 million the United States gave in 2006 "to help Somalis find a pathway out of political chaos, hunger and suffering," he told the lawmakers.

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Diplomacy Still Offers Best Hope for Solution to Darfur Crisis

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Even though policy-makers in both the Bush administration and Congress increasingly are frustrated by the Sudanese government's reluctance to end the violence in Darfur, analysts agree diplomacy still offers the best solution to the crisis that began in early 2003.

On February 8, President Bush's Special Envoy to Sudan Andrew Natsios testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on the crisis in Darfur, saying the United States was "appalled by the atrocities of the war, particularly those against civilians."

Since 2003, more than 200,000 people have died in Darfur while another 2.5 million have been displaced by the violence caused mainly by Jingaweit militias supported by the Sudanese government.

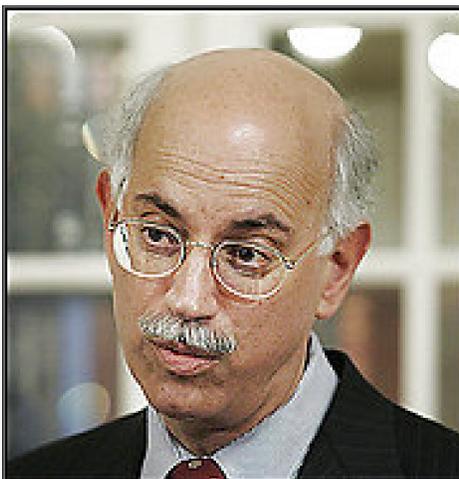
Since 2004, Natsios said, "The United States has made solving conflict in this region a priority. [And] our view remains that a negotiated way out of the crisis in Darfur ... is the most desirable alternative and the option most likely to yield success."

On his most recent trip to Sudan, Natsios told the lawmakers, "I spent two hours with President Bashir. [And] he expressed a willingness to engage with the international community on Darfur."

Although there is little support for direct U.S. military intervention such as a no-fly zone over Darfur or a blockade of Sudan's coast, suggestions born of frustration with both rebels and the government of

President Omar al-Bashir range from increased support for negotiations to calls for more sanctions against the Khartoum regime.

The difficulty of diplomacy was recently born out by State Department spokesman Sean McCormack who on January 5 condemned "the bombing by Sudanese Armed Forces" of a town in which representatives of the African Union



Andrew Natsios is President Bush's special envoy to Sudan.

(AU) had just met with Darfur rebel commanders to urge them to abide by a ceasefire.

That action, McCormack said, "violates the Sudanese government's pledge made in Addis Ababa on November 16, 2006, to facilitate the work of the African Union to achieve a strengthened ceasefire" in Darfur. However, such attacks, said McCormack, "will not weaken the international community's resolve to assist the suffering people of Darfur" through increased diplomatic efforts and more humanitarian assistance.

In a January 23 report on Sudan, Ted Dagne, a specialist in African Affairs with the Congressional Re-

search Service, highlighted U.S. official interest in the crisis by saying, "The Bush administration and Congress ... have been at the forefront in calling for an end to the crisis in Darfur and demanding accountability, especially since mid-2004."

Dagne added in his report that, "U.S. financial support for the peace process and technical assistance during the talks [that led to the 2005 signing of the North-South Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)] were considered by the parties and the mediators as critical."

Also on January 23, the White House protested the Sudanese government's arrest and "assault" of 20 members of the United Nations, the AU mission in Sudan (AMIS) and nongovernmental organizations operating in Nyala, South Darfur.

On the issue of sanctions, Congress passed the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act in fall 2006, which prohibits Americans from entering into certain financial and business relations with Sudan. The United Nations and European Union have also passed limited sanctions against the Khartoum regime while continuing to press for a U.N. force to augment the 7,000 AU peacekeepers already in the country.

Following its passage, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tom Lantos hailed the act, saying the situation in Darfur called for "sustained and intensive diplomatic efforts at the highest level."

But at the February 8 Sudan hearing, Lantos called for something stronger: "I hope that tough sanctions on Khartoum will force the

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Lack of Troop Contributions to Darfur Creates “Bottleneck”

By Stephen Kaufman
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The three-phase deployment of an African Union-United Nations force in Darfur, Sudan, is facing “bottlenecks” because U.N. member states have not made firm commitments to contribute troops, and both international organizations need to work out the command structure of the force, the Bush administration says.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said February 7 that the United States is “actively engaged” in the effort to build the force designed to provide security for Darfur’s inhabitants and humanitarian relief organizations and support the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement.

“[W]hat we need is a few member states to step forward, make the firm commitment that they are going to contribute substantial forces to the AU-U.N. force. That’s what’s needed. We haven’t seen that yet. And it is important that the international system act in this regard,” McCormack said.

He said another “bottleneck” inhibiting the deployment of the force is the need for the United Nations and the African Union to put in place “the logistics and the infrastructure that would support not only phase one and phase two, but down the road phase three.”

He also urged the United Nations to “look at every possible way” to shorten its operating timelines concerning the deployment of the force.

In November 2006, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir committed in principle under an agreement reached in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,

to allow all three phases of the force to deploy, but McCormack said so far the U.N. and AU have deployed only slightly more than 40 individuals out of a proposed 185 as elements of the first phase to provide mainly technical expertise.

In phase two, approximately 1000 individuals would set up headquarters and other infrastructure as “an enabling force” for the main body of the more than 15,000 troops who would arrive as phase three.

“[T]he member states of the U.N. need to now make the commitments of troops to that AU-U.N. force so that we can see if President Bashir will act on his commitments that he has made,” McCormack said.

McCormack acknowledged that the United States and the international community have “a number of different options” if the Sudanese government does not live up to its commitments. He referred to the scenario as “Plan B,” but said the United States is taking Bashir’s word “at face value” and it is “premature” to determine that he is not committed to implementing all three phases of the force.

“In order to determine that, you need to have the forces generated to go in there, and we don’t have those yet. And that’s why it is so important that the member states of the U.N. step up and answer the call for these forces,” he said.

A senior State Department official said between 15,000-20,000 troops are needed for phase three. So far, 46 U.N. military and police personnel have been deployed to Darfur under phase one.

“It’s time for member states to step up,” the official said, adding that

while the United States is not being asked to commit troops, the Bush administration has offered to provide logistical support for the international force.

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

Diplomacy Still Offers Best Hope for Solution to Darfur Crisis . . .

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[Bashir] regime to allow an international civilian protection force to enter Darfur,” he said.

“If we wait much longer, there may be nobody left to protect in Darfur.”

In response to former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Susan Rice’s drastic suggestion that the United States “should begin urgent military planning and preparation” for some type of direct intervention, ranking committee member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen said, “while I agree that in the face of genocide all options must be on the table, I would suggest that such an action must be one of last resort.”

Natsios assured the lawmakers at the Sudan hearing that “if we find the Sudanese government is obstructing progress” on a peaceful solution to Darfur and on implementation of the CPA,” the United States government will change its policy of negotiation and will pursue more coercive measures.” ♦

Rice Announces Huge Debt Relief for Liberia

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States will implement \$391 million in U.S. debt forgiveness for Liberia, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced February 13 at the opening of a two-day "Liberia Partners' Forum" at World Bank headquarters in Washington.

Rice said the United States has contributed more than \$500 million in humanitarian and development assistance to the war-torn West African nation and now is "determined to continue and expand our support."

President Bush "has asked Congress for more than \$200 million in total assistance for fiscal years 2007 and 2008 and we want to do more," she said.

"The United States currently holds \$391 million in outstanding bilateral claims from Liberia. We will cancel that debt -- all of it," Rice told the conference. She added, "We hope this will enable the [Liberian] government to direct more of its resources toward reconstruction and development."

After 14 years of civil strife and 250,000 deaths, Rice said, there is "a time of optimism" in Liberia, due largely to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and her administration, which has "worked tirelessly over the past year to ensure that ... reconstruction and development take root and have a chance for lasting success."

Rice said Sirleaf, who was elected in November 2005, and "her team ... are committed to advancing democracy, rooting out corruption and to working in the best interests of

the Liberian people."

"All of us in the international community applaud her determination and are putting our full support behind the Liberian government," Rice added.

In addition to the United States and World Bank Group, the two-day donors' conference was co-hosted by the United Nations, the European

country owes. She said it largely was incurred "unwisely" by "previously nonperforming governments" that looted the nation over a period of 14 years. These loans, totaling in the billions, have "largely tripled through accumulated interest," she added.

According to International Monetary Fund Managing Director Rodrigo de Rato, Liberia's debt arrears now



Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is applauded by Secretary Condoleezza Rice and World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz after addressing the Liberia Partners' Forum at World Bank headquarters in Washington February 13. The United States will cancel Liberia's \$391 million debt to enable the country to devote more resources to reconstruction and development, Rice announced. (AP Images)

Union and the African Development Bank. Twenty-two nations also participated, including China, Japan, India, Senegal, Germany, France and the United Kingdom. Multilateral organizations like the African Union and nongovernmental organizations also sent representatives.

The Liberian president, who also addressed the opening session, touched on the \$3.7 billion debt her

organization alone. Both he and World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz, who also spoke at the forum, agreed that the debt burden is "unsustainable" and keeps Liberia from effectively raising its per capita income, which now is less than a dollar a day.

Liberia now has a chance for recovery, Wolfowitz said, because Sirleaf

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has "shown the bold leadership she promised" when first coming into office.

Sirleaf pledged to continue the battle against corruption in Liberia. Corruption, she said, "has eaten away at the fabric of our society." On the economic front, she said her goal was simple: "To move from aid to trade, from economic free-fall" to prosperity for all.

During a break in the conference, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer told USINFO she especially was pleased by two other initiatives Rice mentioned: making Liberia eligible for favorable trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act and resuming direct flights between Liberia and the United States.

"I'm very excited about an Open Skies agreement that will be signed with Liberia to try to establish direct airline transport so that our peoples can move around more easily between our two countries," Frazer said. Bilateral open skies agreements give airlines in both countries

the right to operate air services from any point in one country to any point in the other, as well as to connect those flights to points in third countries. These pacts eliminate restrictions on air services with regard to frequency of flights, the type of aircraft and other aspects.

Measures like that, as well as continued aid and the debt relief, "should be a real boost to the efforts of President Johnson Sirleaf" in putting her country back on the path of sustainable recovery, Frazer added.

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) acting Assistant Administrator for Africa Walter North, who was part of the U.S. delegation at the conference, just returned from visiting Liberia.

At a February 12 briefing for journalists at the State Department, he said: "I was very heartened by the progress I saw taking place there. People you meet on the street are upbeat and looking forward" to a better future under the leadership of Sirleaf.

North said assistance from international donors is doing a good job,

but the government of Liberia is also beginning to increase its revenues by tackling corruption through efforts like the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program, which places donor advisers in key areas, like ports administration, where corruption previously drained off revenues.

After visiting the port of Monrovia during his trip, North said, "You see an incredible amount of activity happening, the vitality of market-places" that in the future could spell prosperity for a Liberia rich in natural resources such as rubber, timber and diamonds.

For more information on U.S. policies, see U.S. Aid to Africa (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/aid_to_africa.html) and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/trade_economic_development/agoa.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>) ♦

U.S. Official Pledges Immediate Help for Somalia . . .

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The texts of prepared statements by Frazer (<http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2007/FrazerTestimony070206.pdf>) (PDF, 295KB), Hess (<http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2007/HessTestimony070206.pdf>) (PDF, 36KB) and other witnesses are available on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee web site.

For more information on U.S. policies,

see Peace and Security in Africa (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/peace_security.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>) ♦

United States Honors Achievements of Naturalized Citizens

By Lauren Monsen
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- As a nation built by immigrants, the United States has a history of welcoming and absorbing new citizens from every corner of the globe. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security celebrates the achievements of talented immigrants in its annual "Outstanding American by Choice" awards.

The awards program, begun in 2006 by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) division of Homeland Security, recognizes the civic participation, professional accomplishments and responsible citizenship of naturalized citizens "who have demonstrated their commitment to the United States and to the common civic values that unite us as Americans," according to USCIS.

Throughout the year, USCIS Director Emilio Gonzalez honors naturalized citizens who have made significant contributions to their communities and their adopted country. Award recipients typically represent a cross-section of society. Ricardo Ernst, a Venezuelan-born logistics expert and professor at the McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University in Washington, is among the 2007 recipients.

Ernst told USINFO that he arrived in the United States in 1983 to pursue a doctoral degree. An engineer by training, he earned his doctorate in operations management from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. "My original intention was to go back home" afterward, he recalled. However, an adviser urged him to gain experience teach-

ing U.S. business logistics, so Ernst applied for a position at Georgetown University. "I've been there ever since, for 20 years now," he said.

have developed an entire logistics program" tailored to the requirements of Latin America.

"Most countries in Latin America have a disadvantage in terms of



Phoenix area residents celebrate after being declared new U.S. citizens during a naturalization ceremony in Phoenix on July 21, 2006. Fifty-two residents took the oath of allegiance and became U.S. citizens. (AP Images)

Logistics, Ernst explained, is the study of "how products are made, moved, and distributed most efficiently." In business, "we move three things: products, information and money." He said globalization and the Internet have revolutionized logistics. "The Internet has been a great accelerator," introducing electronic commerce and altering the supply-chain management of companies.

Besides teaching at Georgetown, Ernst is an instructor with the Latin America Logistics Center, which offers programs in several Latin American countries through a partnership with Georgetown. "We have trained about 6,000 people since 1998," Ernst said. "And we

logistics; the infrastructure is insufficient," he said. While Latin governments are aware of the need to modernize and invest in a better infrastructure, budgetary restraints limit their options. "So we train managers to take advantage of the existing infrastructure and [to] still be competitive," said Ernst.

Of course, "when you talk about Latin America, you can't generalize; the countries are not the same," he pointed out. "Chile is a clear exception in the region; it's a fully developed country, not a developing one." Elsewhere, Latin America "has a long way to go, but we have a moral obligation to help the region prosper in the global marketplace,"

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Enhance Welcome for Visitors, Say Travel, Tourism Officials

By Jeffrey Thomas
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – Potential visitors to the United States need to be told that the visa process has been accelerated and that America wants them to come, Jay Rasulo, the chairman of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, told a Senate hearing recently.

He commended the U.S. government for improvements such as reducing the time visa seekers must wait for appointments with consular officials, but added, “We must also tell the world we did it -- because negative perceptions have a funny way of lingering long after the reality has changed.”

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, travel to the United States has declined 17 percent, resulting in the loss of nearly 200,000 jobs, \$94 billion in spending and \$16 billion in tax receipts, according to a report, Blueprint to Discover America, submitted to the Senate at the January 31 hearing by a coalition of business leaders. The report makes recommendations for improving the visa process, enhancing security and efficiency at ports of entry and changing the perception that America is unwelcoming to international visitors.

Travel to the United States makes most visitors feel more positively about this nation, said Rasulo, who also chairs the Travel Industry Association and the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board. “If we can get people through the gate, we can change their perceptions of America,” he told the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

The U.S. State Department says it has reduced the wait for a temporary business or tourist visa appointment to one week or less at two-thirds of its embassies and consulates. The wait is 30 days or less at fully 90 percent of U.S. embassies and consulates. Students



A U.S. Customs officer assists a visitor to the United States at San Francisco International Airport. (AP Images)

and urgent business travelers receive priority appointments at all posts. Visas are issued within two days of the interview in 97 percent of cases.

These efforts are paying off, according to the State Department. The number of temporary business and tourist visas issued in fiscal year 2006 was up 12 percent over fiscal year 2005, and the number of student/exchange visitor visas increased by 14 percent. The Commerce Department has predicted record arrivals and receipts from international travelers to the United States in 2006. Rasulo told the January 31 hearing that the Blueprint group conducted research to understand why some people avoid traveling to the United States. “It was very clear to us that confusion and misperceptions about the entry experience are a far bigger deterrent than the processes themselves,” he said.

The private sector Blueprint to Discover American shares the same goals as the joint vision articulated a year ago by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff: to protect the United States better while at the same time welcoming legitimate visitors as warmly as possible. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2006/Jan/19-941422.html>).)

As part of the Rice-Chertoff vision, the United States has been working to test methods of collecting fingerprints and other data for select groups of applicants to be processed without having to visit an embassy facility and to create a one-stop redress center for travelers who have concerns about their treatment in the screening process.

In August 2006, the Department of State began issuing electronic passports to business and tourist travelers, and as part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), the Department of State has proposed a PASSport card for border community residents.

As part of its commitment to welcome travelers, the State Department has added 570 consular positions worldwide, invested millions in technology and information sharing, and begun posting visa appointment wait times online, according to a State Department fact sheet.

The Department of Homeland Security has established the Consolidated Trusted Traveler Program (CTTP) to integrate all existing and proposed trusted traveler programs for international air, land and sea travel.

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United States Honors Achievements of Naturalized Citizens . . .

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he said. "I strongly favor free-trade agreements" as vehicles for enhancing competitiveness.

"But we are in a politically turbulent time," he said. Ernst expressed particular concern over developments in his homeland of Venezuela, where President Hugo Chavez has begun nationalizing certain industries. "Venezuela is moving the pendulum in the wrong direction," he said. "Nationalization scares potential investors" and cannot guarantee that income will be redistributed to the needy, "so it's not likely to enhance the well-being of Venezuelans."

Chavez's economic policies, said Ernst, "are going against the natural direction that has proven to work. You need to open your borders, not close them."

Ernst became a U.S. citizen in 1997, and he said he decided to seek citizenship because the United

States "is a fantastic country that respects your cultural heritage and identity, and it encourages you to push yourself to the limits of what you can give." Also, "the United States rewards hard work."

He advised new immigrants to participate in the civic life of their communities, and to learn English as quickly as possible. Finally, Ernst urged newcomers to pursue higher education, because "it's the key to moving up through the layers of American society."

OTHER AWARD RECIPIENTS

USCIS has made awards to three other immigrants so far in 2007: Mexican-born filmmaker Alejandro Gomez Monteverde of Los Angeles; Miami Mayor Manuel Diaz, who was born in Cuba; and attorney Miguel Orozco, who was born in Ecuador and now heads the international affairs practice of a law office in Orange County, California.

"Outstanding American by Choice"

honorees from 2006 include Haitian-born Gepsie Metellus, executive director of the Sant La Neighborhood Center for Haitian immigrants in Miami, and Renu Khator, a native of India who now serves as provost and senior vice president of academic affairs at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

As Khator explained to CityMasala magazine in March 2006, new immigrants to the United States should be "very proud" of their heritage, which "is an asset." Respecting one's cultural roots is entirely compatible with embracing a new life in the United States, she said.

"You should honor the land you have adopted and must find a very harmonious way of building upon the two cultures," said Khator.

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Enhance Welcome for Visitors, Say Travel, Tourism Officials . . .

(Continued from page 10)

On January 23, the United States instituted a requirement that all travelers entering the United States by air, including American citizens, submit a passport or other secure document, which not only will enhance security but also facilitate travel by limiting the number of documents with which border inspectors must be familiar.

As of November 2006, the State Department required all nonimmigrant visa applicants to use the electronic visa application form, which allows consular staff to fo-

cus on higher-priority tasks. The Department of State is promising a new online application form by September 2007 that will permit greater screening in advance of the visa interview.

An example of the commitment to improve service was cited by another witness, Jonathan Tisch, chairman and of Loews Hotels: when wait times for visas in India reached as long as six months in November 2006, the State Department committed additional staffing and resources, processing backlogged applications and reducing wait times to less than one week in

three of its four consulates. Tisch suggested creating "rapid response teams" that could be sent wherever heavy demand creates such backlogs.

For more information on U.S. visa and travel policies, see Destination USA (<http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/>) on the State Department Web site.

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

Ankara Meeting Considers Ways to Confront Nuclear Terrorism

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- A group of partner nations is meeting in Turkey to sketch out an agenda of future counterterrorism and nonproliferation activities to prevent and reduce the threat of nuclear terrorism.

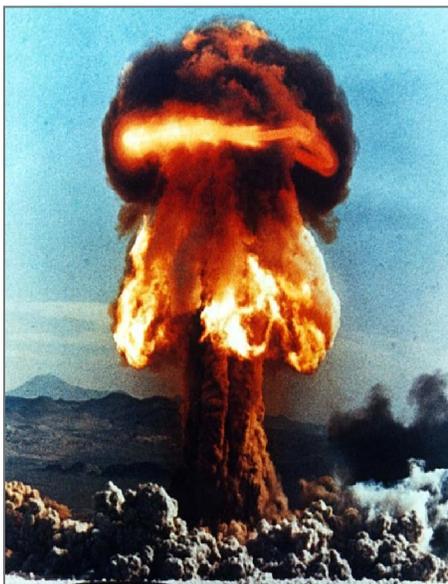
The gathering in Ankara, Turkey, February 12 and 13 will be the second meeting of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. The first was held in Morocco in October 2006.

The United States and Russia have been looking for ways to increase international cooperation on the initiative, which first was unveiled by the leaders of the two countries in St. Petersburg, Russia, in July 2006.

The initiative recognizes the international community must devote more resources to deny terrorists the ability to attack nuclear facilities or acquire nuclear or radiological materials. In some cases, heading off this threat would require nations to strengthen national laws to deter nuclear smuggling or broader engagement by the private sector to deny terrorists access to nuclear technology.

Thirteen nations endorsed the initiative in Rabat, Morocco, to enhance security for civilian nuclear facilities, agreed to look for ways to account better for the existence of radioactive and nuclear materials, and acknowledged the need to find more sophisticated detection mechanisms for such materials as a hedge against illicit trafficking.

Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan,



Morocco, Turkey, the United States, Russia and the United Kingdom agreed then to share information broadly to deny safe haven to terrorists and the financing that terrorists need for access to nuclear bomb-making materials.

Nations agreed to find ways to improve their ability to search for and seize these nuclear materials and investigate and determine the forensic origin of substances that might be used by terrorists to construct crude nuclear explosive devices.

The head of the U.S. delegation to Rabat, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Robert Joseph, observed: "It is no exaggeration to say that the devastating catastrophic consequences that could result from the use of such a weapon would change the world as we know it." The initiative, he said, provides a way to "build our collective and individual capacity to combat nuclear terrorism on a determined and systematic basis."

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Kislyak told the first meeting

of states interested in pursuing the initiative that the nuclear terror threat needs to be countered through cooperation "on a multilateral basis and on a global scale."

"We must stop terrorists from acquiring nuclear weapons," Joseph told reporters following the initiative's progress. And, outreach, at all levels, is clearly an important component of achieving that objective.

State Department official Andrew Grant told a port security conference in Virginia in January that the initiative provides another opportunity "to partner with governments who are committed to protecting the global maritime supply chain from nuclear and radiological threats."

The scope of activities associated with the initiative includes but is not limited to participating in or hosting simulated nuclear counterterrorism exercises and sponsoring or sending representatives to workshops to develop mechanisms for rapid, confidential exchanges of technical and operational information that could stop the illicit transfer of nuclear materials or identify ways to respond should a deadly attack occur.

None of the activities associated with the initiative relate in any way to the military programs of nuclear weapons states that are members of the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Additionally, the initiative's activities are not meant to restrict access to the legitimate use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. ♦

Bush Seeks \$294.8 Billion for Counterterrorism

By David McKeeby
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington — President Bush asked Congress for significant spending increases in fiscal year 2008 to fight terrorism and to safeguard the United States from future attacks.

“As commander in chief, my highest priority is the security of the nation,” Bush said in a letter introducing the White House’s 2008 funding request. “My budget invests substantial resources to fight the Global War on Terror and ensure our homeland is protected from those who would do us harm.”

The White House is seeking \$294.8 billion to fund global counterterrorism operations, including \$99.6 billion for fiscal year 2007, \$145.2 billion in 2008 and \$50 billion in 2009.

The majority of the funding would be allocated to the Department of Defense, but \$9.3 billion is being sought for the State Department, and \$0.5 billion for other agencies.

These funds are in addition to the \$70 billion passed by Congress for the Defense Department in 2006.

Since 2001, Congress has appropriated more than \$425 billion for anti-terrorism activities across the U.S. government. The fiscal year 2008 funding request is the largest made for anti-terrorism programs to date; if approved, it would increase overall funding allocated to fighting terrorism to more than \$700 billion since the 2001 attacks on New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

Nearly 97 percent of the requested 2008 counterterrorism funding -- \$285.1 billion -- would go to the Defense Department to pay for ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which the Bush administration considers to be key

in the Middle East and South Asia, to promote democracy and strengthen international cooperation against terrorism and other transnational threats.

Although not expressly a counterterrorism program, State’s foreign military financing initiative provides security assistance to help allies defend their countries from internal and external threats. The administration requested \$4.5 billion for the program, which, if approved as requested, will deliver \$2.4 billion to Israel, \$1.3 billion to Egypt, \$300 million to Pakistan, \$200 million to Jordan and \$15.7 million to Indonesia. An additional \$89.5 million is sought to help provide training for foreign military officers under State’s International Military Education and Training program.

The administration also requested more than \$170 million for State’s counterterrorism



Major Chris Rogers and 1st Lieutenant Seth Nieman survey the site of a Joint Security Station in Baghdad, Iraq, January 23. (AP Images)

fronts in the global war on terrorism. But military experts long have emphasized that military force alone never will defeat terrorism. A closer look at the president’s request shows the administration’s continued commitment to marshaling expertise from agencies across the U.S. government and expanding international partnerships to fight terrorism.

The White House requested \$36.2 billion for the State Department, a 22 percent increase from its 2006 appropriation. Most of the increase would go toward Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s “transformational diplomacy” initiative, which seeks to reposition American diplomats to critical locations across the globe, particularly

programs. Its anti-terrorism assistance program, which funds training, equipment and support to help foreign governments detect, deter and prevent terrorist attacks, would receive the largest amount, at \$124 million, under the president’s request.

Most of the \$18.3 million funding increase requested by the president for State Department anti-terrorist programs would go to its interdiction program. Under the program, U.S. officials work with more than 25 countries to help them track and prevent crossborder movement by terrorists.

The president also requested \$6 million for State’s counterterrorism

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Ending Abuses of Girl Children Theme of U.N. Conference

By Lea Terhune
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Gender equity and the elimination of discrimination and violence against girl children are themes of the upcoming 51st session of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The United States delegation is working on two resolutions to end violence against girls, according to Patricia P. Brister, U.S. representative to the CSW.

Brister said the U.S. team has drafted and is soliciting support for a resolution against forced and child marriages. "There actually has never been a resolution with that title, although it has been mentioned in other U.N. documents," she told USINFO. "We are also talking with other countries, trying to build consensus on female infanticide, [and] sex-selective abortion," she said.

Forcing young girls into marriage "contributes to the economic downfall of a community," Brister said. "When girls are married at 12 years old they certainly have no way of being educated or moving up in their system to a more economically advantageous situation."

In addition to the economic impact, there are serious medical consequences when young girls are forced to marry. Maternal and infant mortality rates are higher in child mothers. Prevention of obstetric fistula, a life-altering problem, will figure in the U.S. resolution, Brister said.

Fistula commonly afflicts immature girls who give birth where skilled

obstetric care is unavailable and who have obstructed labor. If there is no timely medical intervention, and the baby's head compresses against the mother's pelvic bone for several days, the baby dies and the mother is rendered incontinent be-



cause of the fistula, or hole, torn in her soft tissue. Usually the condition condemns the mother to a life as an outcast.

The U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA) has campaigned to end obstetric fistula since 2003. According to UNFPA, "Poverty, malnutrition, poor health services, early child-bearing and gender discrimination are interlinked root causes of obstetric fistula." Female genital mutilation and violent rape also cause the condition.

The health and well-being of girls are paramount, Brister said. "Twelve- and 14-year-old girls are married; they are often kidnapped into marriage; they are beaten; they are raped by their husbands; they have no freedoms whatsoever."

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS

Financial independence helps free women from such victimization. "We've been very involved in the economic empowerment of women and girls, too," Brister said, citing microfinancing programs funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). "When you empower women, you empower a family," she said.

Brister said 70 percent of microcredit loans go to women. "I think that's very telling in and of itself that women do want to further their goals and bring themselves out of this situation," she said.

Andrea Bottner, senior coordinator of the State Department's Office of International Women's Issues, agreed. She told USINFO that programs funded through her office aim to support women in areas where they need it most: education, health care and protection from violence so they can contribute to society. "Women have a lot to offer," she said.

"A woman needs to be safe at home ... then she is more enabled

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Fighting Human Trafficking a U.S. Governmentwide Effort

By Michelle Austein
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Preventing human trafficking and protecting victims in the United States is a multiagency effort and a top priority, according to representatives of several U.S. government agencies.

"Not one agency has the infrastructure or the means to be able to address trafficking in persons alone," said Gabriel Garcia, chief of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Human Smuggling and Trafficking Unit.

Garcia was one of many government officials who spoke to foreign journalists during a tour organized by the Department of State's Foreign Press Center in Washington and New York, February 5-7. The journalists met with U.S. and U.N. officials and representatives from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working to prevent human trafficking.

Of the approximately 600,000 to 800,000 people coerced or forced into crossing international borders each year, about 14,500 to 17,500 end up in the United States, according to U.S. government estimates.

U.S. agencies are working to stop trafficking through training to help better identify victims, improving services provided to victims and by increasing public awareness campaigns.

IDENTIFYING AND PROTECTING VICTIMS

Those trafficked into and within the United States come from at least 65 countries. Of the 1,100 people since 2001 certified by the Department of Health and Human Services

to be trafficking victims, the greatest numbers have come from Vietnam, Mexico and El Salvador.

The U.S. approach is centered on the victim, the officials said. The first priority, said Grace Chung



A Thai worker led to the U.S. by a labor trafficker and an outreach director embrace at a conference in Los Angeles. (AP Images)

Becker, deputy assistant attorney general for Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division, is to rescue the victim.

Immigration officials try to stop trafficking at the 327 ports of entry into the United States; however, many of those entering the United States do not realize they are being trafficked, said Garcia. For example, a person initially might have agreed to be smuggled into the United States, but then are forced into domestic servitude or prostitution after they arrive.

Public awareness campaigns, including billboards at airports and televised public-service announcements help explain human trafficking, reassure victims that they will

be protected and warn traffickers that they will be prosecuted.

These public-awareness campaigns, not just for potential victims but for all people, are important because victims often do not come forward, said Martha Newton, director of the Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Victims often are isolated and, in some cases, rarely watch television or leave their place of work. Therefore they have no way of knowing that protective services are available. Additionally, captors, many of whom have taken away their victims' passports, tell their victims that if they run away they will be arrested and deported.

"Victims are paralyzed in fear. They feel trapped. There is no solution they can see," said Wade Horn, assistant secretary for children and families at Health and Human Services.

Much of HHS' \$9.8 million annual budget to fight human trafficking is given to local outreach organizations that help spread information about trafficking to those most likely to come in contact with victims. These organizations talk with municipal workers, health care organizations, social services providers, child welfare offices, local ethnic communities and faith-based organizations. A 24-hour hotline to report possible cases of human trafficking has received 4,500 calls since April 2004.

Partner organizations and nongovernmental organizations also provide support including shelter, clothes, food, psychological services and immigration services to the rescued.

(Continued on page 20)

New Weapon in Place for Fighting Corruption

Washington -- The international fight against corruption is a fairly new phenomenon, and a framework within which to structure that fight is newer still, a State Department anti-corruption official says.

The United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) is a recently created tool that will help governments in this fight, according to John Brandolino, director of anti-crime programs at the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. He and Dmitri Vlassis, secretary of the U.N. Conference of the State Parties to the UNCAC, answered questions online February 5 in a Democracy Dialogues webchat on USINFO. Their topic was the international legal framework for fighting corruption.

Brandolino said that one goal of the UNCAC is to ensure that governments throughout the world crimi-

nalize conduct that is widely agreed to be corrupt. As examples, he said the international community has determined that bribery, money laundering and embezzlement are corrupt practices and detrimental to good governance.

Vlassis, participating from Vienna, Austria, said the implementation of UNCAC provides a unique opportunity to fight corruption. Vlassis termed the convention "a monument to international understanding and consensus." He said that UNCAC resulted from a common recognition of a shared problem.

"The Convention is also tangible proof of the fact that we can achieve tangible solutions by recog-

nizing the problem and focusing on finding practical solutions," Vlassis added.



Among the topics discussed was asset recovery. Vlassis said the UNCAC "elevates asset recovery to one of its fundamental principles." He said the convention's framers wanted principles and procedures so that countries can protect their assets from corruption-related theft and transfer abroad and recover the assets if preventing their loss fails. Furthermore, recognizing that offenders may be in positions of power, UNCAC prescribes a statute of limitations sufficiently long so as to enable prosecution to wait until the offender is out of power. ♦

Bush Seeks \$294.8 Billion for Counterterrorism . . .

(Continued from page 13)

financing unit, which works with countries to detect and investigate terrorist networks, freeze assets and prevent terrorists from concealing money under the cover of businesses and charities.

The president also requested:

\$3.6 billion in 2007 and \$5.9 billion in 2008 for anti-terrorism operations at the 16 agencies that make up the U.S. intelligence community, underscoring the administration's continued emphasis on intelligence collection and analysis, as well as data-sharing through the National Counterterrorism Center and exchanges with U.S. allies.

\$34.3 billion for the Department of Homeland Security, for strengthening border security and immigration enforcement, upgrading scanners to screen cargo for smuggled nuclear materials, and helping state and local governments improve their ability to respond to emergencies.

\$24.3 billion for the Department of Energy, which includes efforts to help countries detect, locate and secure nuclear materials, as well as \$395 million for the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership.

\$20.2 billion for the Department of Justice, including funding to expand FBI anti-terrorism programs and the department's National Security Division, which is tasked with investigating, dismantling and prosecuting

terrorist cells in the United States and overseas. The administration also has requested funding to expand the department's ability to respond to terrorist incidents within the United States that involve nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.

For more information, see Response to Terrorism (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/terrorism.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>) ♦

U.S. Anti-HIV/AIDS Effort Could Become Largest in History

Washington -- The president's budget request for fighting global HIV/AIDS, if approved by Congress, will make that international health initiative the largest in history dedicated to a single disease, the U.S. global AIDS coordinator says.

Ambassador Mark Dybul told reporters at a February 9 press conference in Geneva that the current U.S. spending proposal on global AIDS programs of \$5.4 billion would bring the United States' total AIDS funding to \$17.7 billion for five years. That represents a more than sixfold increase in funding since 2001.

"I think when the history of global health is written, this commitment will be viewed as one of the most important actions in global health," Dybul said.

Nor is this achievement a matter of funding only, he said. Although the money is important, it must be used to achieve results.

"For too long in development we talked about our success based on dollars, not what the dollars went for," Dybul said. "In this instance the president insisted that the money achieve results."

In order for its contributions to be as effective as possible as quickly as possible, Dybul said, the U.S. approach is to support programs

currently operating in other countries, allowing those programs to enlarge and speed up delivery of medicines and services to afflicted populations. U.S. funding thus goes to a variety of governments, nongovernmental organizations, and faith- and community-based organizations.

"These aren't American programs. These are African programs and Asian programs, Caribbean and Latin American programs that we're supporting. President Bush has been very clear on this. We provide resources and support, but it's the leadership and activity in country: That's why they've succeeded," Dybul said.

The ambassador was asked by a journalist about the use of generic drugs and religious-related restrictions on the distribution of condoms as an AIDS preventative. Dybul noted that there are in fact 35 generic drug products, many produced in India using materials imported from China. As for condom distribution, he said, in the first three years of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the American people have supplied 1.3 billion condoms.

U.S. actions are based on sound epidemiology and science. Dybul explained that in a generalized epidemic as exists in sub-Saharan Africa, three components for the pre-

vention of sexual transmission are needed: abstinence or delay of sexual debut; one or few partners; and correct and consistent condom use.

And as with other matters, these programs are developed by the countries themselves, not by the United States, he said.

A transcript (<http://geneva.usmission.gov/Press2007/0209Dybul.html>) of Ambassador Dybul's press conference is available on the Web site of the U.S. Mission in Geneva.

For further information about U.S. programs combating HIV/AIDS, see HIV/AIDS (http://usinfo.state.gov/global_issues/hiv_aids.html).

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

New Fuels Have Huge Potential To Reduce Gasoline Use

By Andrzej Zwaniecki
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- New vehicle fuels and related technologies offer the greatest potential for large reductions in gasoline use and the U.S. economy's dependence on petroleum, a White House report says.

The transportation sector alone accounts for two-thirds of the oil consumed in the United States because only a small fraction of vehicles now are powered by more energy-efficient alternative fuels, according to the 2007 Economic Report of the President.

However, private-sector investment combined with government policies is expected to increase the reliance of the transportation sector on renewable and alternative fuels such as biofuels and hydrogen, flex-fuel, hybrid and other advanced technology vehicles, the report sent to Congress February 12 said.

Annual sales of such vehicles are projected to triple in 2012; by 2030, they are expected to make up more than 25 percent of all light-duty vehicles sold in the United States, according to the Energy Department.

Ethanol, the only biofuel currently used any significant quantities in the U.S. market, is added to gasoline to increase its octane content and to help it burn more completely, thus reducing emissions of carbon monoxide and other pollutants. Many states require gasoline sold at fuel stations to contain between 2 percent and 10 percent ethanol. Under the law passed by Congress

in 2005, gasoline producers are obliged to increase gradually use of ethanol and other alternative fuels from 15 billion liters per year in 2006 to 28.4 billion liters per year in 2012.



The hydrogen-powered General Motors Corporation HydroGen3 minivan uses a hydrogen fuel cell and emits only pure water. (AP Images)

President Bush recently proposed to go beyond this goal and require 132.5 billion liters of alternative and renewable fuels by 2017 as part of his plan to reduce gasoline use by 20 percent over 10 years from what the Department of Energy has projected would be consumed if no further action were taken. Another element of the plan is the reform of the federal fuel economy standards. (See related article (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/pubs.html>).)

The Democratic chairman of the Senate Energy Committee, Jeff Bin-

gaman, questioned the feasibility of the fuel component of the president's plan. During February 7 hearings, he said that based on experts' opinions, U.S. producers are unlikely to exceed 95 billion liters by the specified date.

Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman, who testified before the committee, defended the president's plan. He told senators that it also encompasses renewable and alternative fuels other than ethanol such as buthanol and biodiesel. Based on his conversations with industry representatives, he said, the president's goal is achievable.

Under the congressional renewable fuel standard and the president's plan, fuel imports also would contribute to achieving respective goals, according to the report. Major foreign producers of ethanol, such as Brazil, are looking forward to 2009 when U.S. tariffs on ethanol exports will expire unless Congress decides to renew them.

The Bush administration "desires for this [ethanol] industry in the United States to be able to stand on its own feet and not need the protection of tariff," Under Secretary of Energy Clay Sell said February 1. But whether the administration will support the expiration of the current tariffs will depend on how U.S. ethanol business is "maturing," he said at an industry forum.

The feasibility of the alternative fuel initiative as well as its environmental benefits will depend to a large degree on technological pro-

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Even Aggressive Action Will Not Stop Near-Term Climate Change

By Cheryl Pellerin
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The warming of the planet due to an increase in greenhouse gases has had such a strong impact on land, oceans and atmosphere that no amount of reduction in such emissions will have an effect for several decades, an international panel reports.

Co-authors of the latest report of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) -- a group of government representatives that commissions assessments of climate change every five years -- discussed this and other findings February 8 before the House of Representatives Committee on Science and Technology.

"Essentially, what we've done in the IPCC, perhaps as a medical analogy, is to do a diagnosis of the vital signs of the planet Earth," said co-author Kevin Trenberth of the U.S. National Center for Atmospheric Research. "What we found is that the planet is running a fever and the prognosis is that it's apt to become much worse." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=February&x=20070202172320mlenuhret0.302807>).)

The IPCC was established by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the U.N. Environment Programme to assess the scientific, technical and socio-economic information needed to understand climate change and its impacts. It is open to all United Nations and WMO members.

The reports, prepared by hundreds of climate scientists from around

the world, provide a comprehensive view of the current human understanding of climate science and climate change. Major assessments were made in 1990, 1995 and 2001.

The latest, the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC, has three working groups and a task force on greenhouse gas inventories. Working Group I assesses the science of climate change; Working Group II assesses climate change impacts, adaptation and vulnerability; Working Group III assesses climate change mitigation.

The reports of working groups II and III will be released in spring 2007; a report that contains a synthesis of findings from all three working groups is due in November.

DATA AND DATA GAPS

At the hearing, lead report authors summarized their findings for the committee. A growing body of evidence, they said, shows discernible, physically consistent changes.

These include increases in global average air temperature and atmospheric temperatures above the surface, increases in surface and subsurface ocean water temperature, widespread melting of snow, decreases in Arctic sea-ice extent and thickness, decreases in glacier and small ice-cap extent and mass, and rising global mean sea level.

Progress in understanding how the climate is changing, Trenberth said, comes from improved and extended data sets and data analyses, broader geographical coverage, better understanding of uncertainties

and a wider variety of measurements.

Global warming will continue to occur in the near future, said co-author Susan Solomon, senior scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Earth System Research Laboratory, "even if we were to stabilize all greenhouse gases now instead of having continuing increases."

The greatest uncertainty so far involves the ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica and their great potential to change sea levels.

An ice sheet is a 3.2-kilometer-thick, continentwide pile of snow that has been squeezed to ice under its own weight and spreads out under its own weight. As a result of spreading, the edges of the ice sheet thin, become ice shelves, then break off and become icebergs, said co-author Richard Alley of Pennsylvania State University.

In a warming world, the ice shelves, already in contact with the ocean, can melt very easily underneath, but scientists do not have a good understanding of the process.

"Improved understanding of many aspects of [warming and ice loss] is reflected in the new report," Alley said, "but there are unexpected changes in ice flow that have occurred for which we lack a scientific basis to provide accurate estimates."

This gap in understanding is important, said co-author Gerald Meehl, senior scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, be-

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Even Aggressive Action Will Not Stop Near-Term Climate Change . . .

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cause "additional sea level rise from this source by the end of the 21st century could add another 10-20 centimeters to the upper range [60 centimeters], and higher future sea level rise values cannot be excluded."

U.S. RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

"President Bush devoted a significant portion of his State of the Union address in January to the subject of climate change and to what the United States intends to do about it," said Kurt Volker, principal deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Asian affairs, during a February 12 presentation to the German Marshall Fund in Berlin.

In the speech, Volker said, Bush set "mandatory targets that will make a real difference in meeting the challenges of climate change and energy security." The plan seeks to reduce U.S. gasoline use in 2017 by 20 percent as compared to currently projected use estimates, thus reducing the projected growth of carbon dioxide emissions from transportation sources, which accounted for more than 22 percent of such emissions in 2004. The plan also seeks to raise the mandatory fuels standard to require the use of 132.5 billion liters of renewable and alternative fuels by 2017.

The measures announced in the State of the Union address, if adopted, could cut annual carbon dioxide emissions by 10 percent, around 175 million metric tons, by 2017. That reduction would be

equivalent to that achieved by taking 26 million automobiles off the road.

"President Bush's plan builds on a long record of action on global climate change that all too often goes overlooked," Volker said.

Additional information (<http://www.ipcc.ch/>) is available on the Web site of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

For more information on U.S. policy, see Climate Change and Clean Energy. (http://usinfo.state.gov/global_issues/climate_change.html)

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Fighting Human Trafficking a U.S. Governmentwide Effort . . .

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Trafficking victims found in the United States are afforded the same rights and benefits as refugees. Those certified by Health and Human Services to be trafficking victims are entitled to the full range of American social service systems, including health care under the federal-state Medicaid program.

Certified victims also can apply for a T visa, which enables them to stay in the United States and bring their families over as well. Those who receive T visas must be willing to assist U.S. prosecutors, including testifying against their traffickers.

"We understand that for victims to

be able to be stable we must be able to provide short-term and long-term immigration relief," Garcia said. "This means we don't deport victims of trafficking."

PROSECUTING TRAFFICKERS

The passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2000 gave the Justice Department more authority to prosecute traffickers. Between fiscal years 2001 and 2006, the department has prosecuted 360 defendants and earned 238 convictions. Nearly 75 percent of these cases have dealt with sex trafficking, the others primarily involve forced labor incidents.

On January 31, U.S. Attorney Gen-

eral Alberto Gonzales announced the creation of a new Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit designed to develop new strategies to combat anti-trafficking by expanding enforcement efforts and increasing prosecutions.

The unit will "expand and enhance our ability to fight this crime by working together with federal, state and local investigators and NGOs to tackle the enormous challenges posed by this evil," Gonzales said in a press release.

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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



Ending Abuses of Girl Children Theme of U.N. Conference . . .

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to be empowered and succeed outside the home. To me it is a ripple effect. A woman that is outside in society as a role model of courage, of vision, of entrepreneurial ability -- other women see that." She said, "That's one of the most powerful things you can give young women and other women who might be despairing," to see "a woman who is in control of her life."

Resolutions introduced at the CSW with a strong consensus among countries draw attention to critical problems and engage governments and organizations in seeking change. Past resolutions introduced by the United States on the economic advancement of women and fighting trafficking in persons helped bring results.

Brister said work on such issues continues, and highlighting them at international meetings is important. "What we hope for," she said, "is bringing enough attention to a situation and bringing it out in public enough it will encourage other governments ... to get involved."

The United States also will lead a panel on Burma and the Darfur region of Sudan at the CSW session, which will run from February 26 to March 9.

For more information on U.S. policies, see Women in the Global Community (http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/human_rights/women.html).

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New Fuels Have Huge Potential To Reduce Gasoline Use . . .

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gress and the composition of the alternative fuel portfolio, particularly on the sources of ethanol, according to experts. Most U.S. ethanol is derived from maize through a process that is relatively costly and whose energy and environmental benefits are relatively small. Converting more maize into ethanol also is likely to drive up the prices of the commodity. Experts view cellulosic ethanol derived from switch grass, farm waste and other cellulosic materials as much more promising because it has higher energy value and greater potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

However, cellulosic ethanol, like other advanced vehicle technologies such as hydrogen fuel cells, is not a "proven commercial technology at this point," according to David Greene of the engineering science and technology division at Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

That is why in his budget proposal for the fiscal year that begins October 1, the president called for a 22 percent increase over the 2006 budget request in annual funding for alternative energy research. Since 2001, the federal government has spent close to \$10 billion on such research, according to the report.

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

A fact sheet (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/02/20070212-2.html>) on and the full text (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/pubs.html>) of the Economic Report of the President are available on the White House Web site.

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