



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

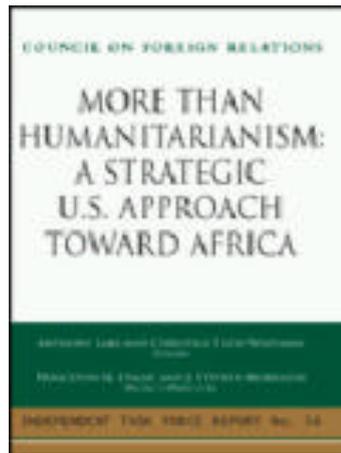
INSIDE

United States Must Remain Highly Engaged in Africa

By Bruce Greenberg
Washington File Staff
Writer

Washington -- Sub-Saharan Africa must be a primary component of U.S. foreign policy because it will continue to grow in importance to U.S. economic and strategic interests as the decade progresses, a panel of policy specialists stressed February 22.

The panel discussion, organized by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)



and held at its Washington headquarters, spotlighted CFR's recently published independent task force report, More

Than Humanitarianism: A Strategic U.S. Approach Toward Africa.

The report's two project directors, CFR's Princeton Lyman and J. Stephen Morrison of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), discussed many of the report's themes and recommendations.

Morrison mentioned U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's recent policy address on

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President Bush Celebrates African-American History Month

Addressing an assembly celebrating African-American History Month held February 22 at the White House, President Bush awarded the Volunteer Service Award to five public-spirited citizens.

The president also called for reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, praised the academic achievements of African-American students and detailed continued African-American economic progress.



President Bush congratulates Dr. Carl Anderson of Washington, upon receiving the President's Volunteer Service Award during a White House celebration of African American History Month.

Among the recipients of the President's Volunteer Service Award were Karl 'Nequa and Katie Ball, both of Mississippi, Texan Steve Ellis and Georgia's Joan Thomas. Bush praised their efforts and initiative from mentoring inner-city girls, encouraging youth volunteers and establishing college scholarships for underprivileged children.

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U.S. Embassy Participates in Addis Chamber Trade Fair



(Left to right) Ato Yordanos Tadesse, owner and Managing Director of Bethlehem Pharmaceuticals, Elizabeth Jaffee, U.S. Embassy Commercial Officer, Ambassador Huddleston, and Ato Tamrat Bekele, General Manager of International Clinical Laboratories in front of the U.S. Embassy booth at the trade fair.

U.S. Charge d'Affaires, Ambassador Vicki Huddleston, and Ethiopia's Minister of Trade and Industry, Ato Girma Birru, opened the 10th Addis Chamber International Trade Fair, which was held at the Exhibition Center in Addis Ababa on February 23, 2006.

The US Embassy participated in the trade fair to promote U.S. government development programs and policies in support of US-Ethiopia business links. The developmental programs included the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), Growing Ethiopian Market (Support for Ethiopian exports in coffee, leather and cereals), Finding US Partners, Products and Services, and Development Credit Authority (DCA)- Loan guarantee program. The U.S. Embassy provided a separate counseling corner where it gave a one-to-one counseling to a number of visitors who required the services. This is the second consecutive time that the U.S. Embassy participated in a similar trade fair. Prominent Ethio-American business people, investors and other guests were invited to the fair.

In addition, the U.S. Embassy also organized a closed half-day seminar "Doing Business with the U.S." where more than 50 people from different sectors participated.

The trade fair closed on March 1st. A record number 290 local and foreign companies took part in the fair with 125 foreign and 165 local exhibitors. The foreign participants came from 26 different countries. ♦

U.S. Embassy Sponsors English ACCESS Program



Addis Ababa tenth graders learn computer skills as part of the Embassy-sponsored English ACCESS Micro-scholarships Program, which provides after-school English classes to eighty students who were competitively selected from among ten public schools. This is the program's first year of operation, and it is hoped that it will be expanded in the coming year to allow more talented students to participate. ♦

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"transformational diplomacy," with its emphasis on reallocating a heavily weighted U.S. diplomatic presence in Western and Northern Europe to less-developed areas of the world, such as Africa. He said this reallocation would fill a gap in terms of U.S. security in the region and would increase U.S. public diplomacy engagement.

"To have the secretary say, 'Let's step back and take a new look at the way we do foreign aid and how we engage in countries and regions,' is refreshing, because in Africa there are a lot of resources flowing and new ways to coordinate our aid and trade programs," he added.

Lyman complimented Rice "on this new phase of engagement" with the developing world. "What you have," he said, "is a big switch in American foreign policy, away from Russia and Europe to the areas where our interests are heavily engaged in a new way."

Africa always has been a bipartisan issue in the United States, unlike Iraq, Lyman said. "If you look at all the recent initiatives on Africa -- MCC [Millennium Challenge Corporation], AGOA [African Growth and Opportunity Act] or PEPFAR [President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief] -- you have strong bipartisan support. That's a plus."

AFRICAN LEADERSHIP IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION



Princeton Lyman

Responding to a question from the audience on conflict resolution in Africa, Lyman said U.S. involvement needs to be more flexible so that "we can deal with more than one crisis at a time."

Lyman also recognized "a tremendous growth in African leadership in conflict resolution -- the Africans who have been in the forefront in help-

ing to negotiate an end to war in the Congo, as they are in the lead in trying to bring a political solution in Darfur." African leadership in the political process has been critical "in whatever progress has been made" in these and other conflicts, he said.

In regard to supplying foreign aid to energy-rich areas of Africa, Morrison said, "We are calling for a high-level forum that would begin to get leadership committed to norms of accountability and transparency. We need to find the reformers and support them."

He called for "greater flexibility" and "the kind of geopolitical shift that puts a much higher priority on this region within the White House and within the upper reaches of the State Department."

Commenting on the progress of democratization on the continent, Lyman called for a doubling of resources in the region to help Africans demand accountability from their governments.

China was mentioned as a very real competitor with the United States because of its aggressive economic programs in sub-Saharan Africa, but Lyman was critical of the country for seeming to ignore human rights and corruption in favor of "business for business' sake."

Morrison said that Sudan has been an example "where China and the U.S. have collided" in terms of blocking effective sanc-

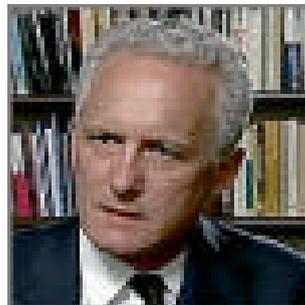
tions on the Khartoum government in response to armed militias' violence in Darfur. Similarly, "with [President Robert] Mugabe in Zimbabwe."

"We believe that in the broader context, a serious and strategic dialogue with

China can begin to bring those issues forward," he said.

"They want to be seen as a major 'player' in the world, and to be a major 'player' you have to carry a certain degree of responsibility," Lyman said.

With regard to the proper role for the U.S. private sector in Africa's development, Lyman said that even though American business



Stephen Morrison

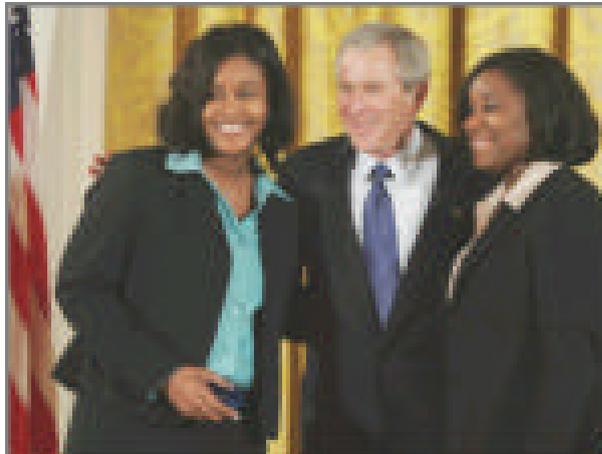
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President Bush Celebrates African-American History Month . . .

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Noting the recent deaths of Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King -- "heroes, women whose grace and determination helped change the path of American history" -- Bush praised their "ideal of active citizenship." One result of their efforts, the president said, was the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He called upon Congress to reauthorize the act. (See African American Rights (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/civil_rights/african_american_rights.html).

The president also praised the effect of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which sought to increase state accountability for educational progress and, under certain circumstances, afford parents greater flexibility in choosing the schools their children will attend. The act, Bush said, challenged "the soft bigotry of low expectations." He cited improved reading and math scores among African-American students.



President George W. Bush congratulates Carrieatha "Katie" Ball and her sister, Karl'Nequa Ball of Jackson, Miss., after awarding them the President's Volunteer Service Awards during a White House celebration of African American History Month. White House photo by Paul Morse

Bush also cited examples of African-American economic progress. Small Business Administration loans to businesses owned by African-Americans are up 42 percent, while business- and homeowner-ship are at record levels, he said.

African-American History Month is celebrated each February. It derives from Negro History Week,

established in 1926 and originally celebrated during the second week of February. The month especially honored the birthdays of Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave turned abolitionist, journalist, and orator, and Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the United States, under whose leadership the nation waged the 1861-1865 Civil War that ended slavery.

For additional information see African American History Month (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/african_americans/African_American_History_Month.html).

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largely has been involved in the extractive industries, "we should encourage involvement on a grander scale" and prod African states to come together to invest jointly in the United States.

He added that the Bush administration's Millennium Challenge Corporation is playing a positive role in the development of democracy in Africa.

For more information on U.S. policy in the region, see Africa (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/>) and Millen-

nium Challenge Account (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/mca.html).

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USAID Providing Emergency Food Aid to Drought-Wracked Kenya

By Charles W. Corey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington --In response to an ongoing drought and a request for assistance from the government of Kenya, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is providing 22,800 metric tons (MT) of emergency food aid to the East African nation, the agency announced February 23.

The \$15.7 million in assistance includes the commodity costs, ocean and inland transportation and handling, a USAID press release notes. USAID will provide food supplies, including wheat, whole yellow peas and vegetable oil, through the World Food Program's (WFP's) drought emergency operation in Kenya.

The Kenya drought emergency operation began in August 2004. Since that time USAID has provided 144,790 MT of emergency food aid, valued at \$87.14 million. On February 8, the Kenyan govern-

ment issued a fresh appeal for continued food assistance.

The failure of the short-rains season further aggravated the drought in northern and eastern Kenya.



A carcass of an impala lies on the roadside in Kajiado district, some 110 km (68 miles) from Nairobi February 22, 2006. Kenya's worst drought in years is killing wild animals and livestock as well as farmers' crops. REUTERS/Antony Njuguna

Where rains occurred, they began late and ended early, and coverage was limited.

The Kenya drought is part of the latest crisis sweeping across the Horn of Africa, with 1.4 million people needing emergency food

aid from WFP in southern Somalia, 1.5 million people in Ethiopia and 60,000 in Djibouti, according to a WFP release.

Because of the lack of food and water, livestock -- particularly cattle, but also sheep, camels, donkeys and goats -- are dying in large numbers in arid northern Kenya, where pastoralists are entirely dependent on their herds.

The U.S. Agency for International Development has provided economic and humanitarian assistance worldwide for more than 40 years.

For additional information, see U.S. Aid to Africa (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/aid_to_africa.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>) ♦

Liberia Seen at "Turning Point" Under President Sirleaf

By Charles W. Corey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Liberia, with its newly elected president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, is now at a "turning point" where real progress can be achieved in economic development, says Stephen Hayes, president of the Corporate Council on Africa (CCA).



Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
Liberian President

But will the country be successful in the long term? "I don't know," Hayes said in a February 28 interview with the Washington File. "Clearly, there is an opportunity there now that has not existed in Liberia in the previous two or three decades," with the recent election of Sirleaf, whom he called an "exceptional leader."

The Corporate Council on Africa was founded in 1993 to help foster and facilitate U.S.-Africa busi-

ness, trade and investment ties. CCA member companies are responsible for nearly 85 percent of all U.S. private-sector investment in Africa.

Sirleaf, a banker by trade, was inaugurated as Liberia's first woman president at a January 16 ceremony in Monrovia, attended by first lady Laura Bush and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Hayes, who knows Sirleaf personally, said she is "committed to integrity." She has a vision of how her government can work, he said, "and she is going to follow that vision. She clearly cares about the country. A lot of people are elected because they care more about the fame or the position. That is not what she is about. She cares about the people."

Under Sirleaf's leadership, Hayes said, Liberia already has demonstrated it is committed to positive change. "She has swept everyone out of the finance ministry. She has put in her own finance minister [who was formerly with the World Bank] to regulate the finance and banking sector." That is important, he said, because that sector long has been the source of major corruption.

Hayes said the member companies of CCA also can help Liberia. "It is going to make a major difference if we can get U.S. companies to invest. ... I think it is going to be politically important because it will be a good signal to the people of Liberia. Because they have Ellen as their president, they will be able to draw new business into Liberia.

"Economically, every job is important" for the country's long-term development, he stressed.

Asked how U.S. business can help Liberia, Hayes said, "They need everything," particularly infrastructure such as roads, bridges and telecommunications systems, which largely were destroyed during the country's long-running civil war.

"You name it, they really need it," he said.

Hayes said another reason for optimism about Liberia's future is that the rule of law will be enforced during Sirleaf's presidency. That, he said, is essential to attracting American business.

"That is one of the biggest reasons why American business is not engaged in Africa to the extent that it should be or could be," he said, because sometimes the rule of law is not enforced fully and fairly.

"We tend to be very cautious," he said. "We want to make sure that business agreements -- understandably -- are going to hold. A lot of times they don't. You need to know if there is a strong court system."

Asked about the importance of democracy, Hayes said, "Ironically, it is not so much the democratic election that drives businesses [to invest] as much as knowing that there is a sense of stability and integrity.

"Stability and long-term strength of contract is really one of the most important things to encourage companies to go in," he

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American Knitter Turns Dream into Reality for Women in Rwanda

By Susan Ellis
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- "Making beautiful things lifts the spirit and offers hope, and in Rwanda I really saw it happen," says Cari Clement, an American woman from the state of Vermont who helps African women in Rwanda rebuild their lives by providing machines they use for knitting products for export and domestic sale.

The only fact most Americans know about Rwanda is the genocide that happened there in 1994. But Clement knows it as a beautiful country with intelligent, energetic, smiling women eager to work and support themselves and their families.

Her dream of helping these women through knitting led her to develop a program called Rwanda Knits in 2003.

"The initial donation was of 60 [knitting] machines, accessories and training," she says. "These went to the refugee camps and were donated through UNHCR [Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees]. On my second trip over, in January 2004, we brought an additional 30 machines, which were donated to AVEGA [an association of widows from the genocide] and AVVAIS [an association of widows affected by AIDS]. This comprises the 90 machines, which were donated within the first year," she told the

Washington File in a telephone interview.

Clement says Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy deserves much of the credit for getting her project off the ground. When she called him for a letter of support, his aide Tim Reiser mentioned that he was going to Rwanda. She suggested that Reiser go see the Rwanda



Cari Clement, Bpeace member and co-founder of Bond America, teaches Rwandan women how to use her company's knitting machine.

Knits programs, and "he went to the refugee camp in Gihembe -- that's in Byumba province, about an hour from Kigali. And it's just destitute ... dust everywhere, no windows -- but everybody came there ready to go to work."

Reiser was so impressed that he told the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) officials with him that they should fund the program. As a result, Clement, who had been grant-writing for a year, received a \$99,000 grant for Rwanda Knits.

USAID and Rwandans and Americans in Partnership, a Rwanda-

based nongovernmental agency, announced the grant in June 2005. It funded the establishment of 13 new and ultimately self-sustaining knitting cooperatives throughout Rwanda, providing each group with 40 knitting machines, accessories, yarn and training. Some also were trained and equipped to finish knitted goods

for export, including embellishing (embroidery, crochet, etc.), labeling, inspecting, packing and preparing export documents.

The Rwandan women were not only fast learners, Clement said, but also extremely persevering, determined to learn everything they could. Within a few months they were producing sweaters, baby

items and blankets and selling them in the local markets.

Although many people do not realize it, "It is very cool in Rwanda," Clement said, "especially at night, mostly due to the high elevation." The altitude ranges from 1200 meters to 1800 meters above sea level.

"Africans are also much more susceptible to the cold, especially the babies," she said. "The main competition for the knitted goods domestically will be from used-clothing sellers. We're focusing on babies, since, traditionally, you

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cannot give a new mother anything used for her baby."

HELPING WOMEN REBUILD THEIR LIVES

The first machines Clement donated went to the women of the Kiziba refugee camp in Kibuye, Rwanda. The women who received the second donation included people like Esperance, who was 15 when all her relatives except one were murdered during the 1994 genocide. Esperance escaped into the forest, living alone for weeks and emerging only at night to find food.

Another woman, Jeanette, was raped by 60 soldiers in front of her family. She is haunted not only by the memory, but also by the fact that she is now HIV-positive.

One of the instructors Clement trained is Faraha, a refugee from Congo. Faraha escaped with her family from Congo, but her father was shot on the way to Rwanda. She sends nearly all of what she earns in Rwandan francs back to her family in the refugee camps.

"None of the teachers had any real source of income before the knitting project. They all earn at least what Faraha does and then

also make dollars with knitting projects for export," Clement said.

A current project involved their knitting 200 scarves for Diane von Furstenberg, an American fashion designer. Clement also arranged for many of the knitted products to be included in the gift bags for winners at the recent Emmy awards, which honor excellence in U.S. television broadcasting.

Clement says her best experience was in January 2004, "when, accompanied by my 27-year-old daughter, Naima, I returned to the Kiziba refugee camp's women's center. Before we left the U.S., I had continually asked UNHCR if the women had learned the machines and if they were knitting because I had made a significant commitment that they would be able to produce 500 scarves in two weeks for us to put into gift bags for Grammy [an award honoring recording industry achievement] recipients. They really couldn't tell me, but they thought the women had been knitting a bit.

Clement said she and her daughter were apprehensive when they entered the center not knowing if the women had learned to use the machines yet. But the two were greeted with singing and dancing and walls lined with products the women had produced. "The women made 650 scarves in five

days," she said.

Over the past 30 months, Clement has worked with about 400 women in Rwanda. The USAID grant will expand her organization's reach to more than 1,000 women.

More information on the Rwanda Knits program can be found on the Web sites of the Fiber and Craft Entrepreneurial Center (<http://www.fiberandcraft.org/>), the Business Council for Peace (<http://www.bpeace.com/>) and Economic Development Imports (<http://www.edimports.com/>).

For information on how U.S. foreign assistance is affecting lives, see Partnership for a Better Life (<http://usinfo.state.gov/partnerships/index.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 Issuing New Electronic Passports in Pilot Program

Washington -- The United States is issuing electronic passports as part of a pilot program for diplomatic passports, and plans to issue U.S. e-passports to the American public at all domestic passport agencies by the end of 2006, the State Department announced.

According to the State Department media note on the new passports, the e-passport integrates the latest concepts in electronic document protection and readability and aims to facilitate international travel for U.S. citizens while enhancing border security. The State Department began limited production of the e-passport December 30, 2005.

Officials say the e-passport is the same as a traditional passport with the addition of a small integrated circuit (or "chip") embedded in the back cover. The new passport combines face-recognition and chip technology.

According to State Department documents, the chip securely will store the same data visually displayed on the photo page of the passport (name, date of birth, gender, place of birth, dates of passport issuance and expiration, passport number), and will also include a digital photograph. The inclusion of the digital photograph will enable biometric comparison, through the use of facial recognition technology at international borders, officials say.

"The information contained on the integrated circuit embedded in the passport will not provide a means to track U.S. citizens. This information will be used only in identity verification at ports of entry during travel," State Department Consular Affairs spokes-

woman Laura Tischler said in an interview February 27.

To prevent data written to the chip from being susceptible to unauthorized reading, Tischler said that "anti-skimming" shielding material has been incorporated in the passports front cover, which she said prevents the chip from being read when the passport book is closed.

The official said the State Department also has included basic access control (BAC) technology in the new passports to prevent skimming and eavesdropping.

According to State Department documents, BAC is similar to a personal identification number used in automatic teller machine (ATM) transactions. In the case of the e-passport, characters from the printed machine-readable zone of the passport must be read first in order to unlock the chip for reading. Thus, when an electronic passport is presented to an inspector at a port of entry, the inspector must scan the printed lines of data to be able to read the data on the chip.

The biometric passport requirements stem from U.S. legislation passed in 2002 -- the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002 (also known as the Border Security Act). The law originally required that the government of countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) certify they had a program to produce tamper-resistant, machine-readable passports that incorporate a biometric identifier that complies with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards by October 26, 2004. In mid-2004, Congress extended the deadline one year.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, further clarified requirements for continued participation in the VWP in Spring 2005, specifying that by October 26, 2006, travelers from VWP countries with a passport issued on or after this date must present a passport with an integrated circuit chip, also known as e-passport, capable of storing biographic information from the passport's data page, a digitized photograph and other biometric information. (See related article

The VWP enables citizens of 27 countries to visit the United States for tourism or business for up to 90 days without obtaining a visa. Those countries are Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Tischler said the United States is leading global efforts to ensure the e-passport "is a secure, globally interoperable document that meets ICAO standards."

Discussing the benefits of the e-passport, she said the document prevents fraud and protects identity. "[I]f stolen, it makes it incredibly difficult for someone else to use your passport. It [The e-passport] gives border inspectors a new tool to verify you are the person to whom a given government issued that document," she said.

"The e-passport is a better way of ensuring the passport bearer is the person to whom the passport was issued," she said. ♦

American Aid to Muslims Praised by Chadian Religious Leader

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – Abeche in eastern Chad was the scene of a festive ceremony February 15 as the nation's grand imam and top Chadian officials accepted the delivery of 3,000 educational kits for students in bilingual (Arabic and French) schools in the city from U.S. Ambassador Marc Wall.

According to documents provided by the U.S. Embassy in N'djamena, the ceremony was an example of the growing outreach efforts the U.S. government is making toward Muslim populations.

The U.S. Embassy earlier had provided more than 2,000 educational kits to high schools in the towns of Mao and Bol, where they will be used partly by U.S. Peace Corps volunteers who teach English and science courses in local schools.

The educational kits consist of a backpack that includes a French/English or Arabic/English dictionary, a world map, a notepad, pens, pencils and a photographic essay on the United States called "America 24/7." The U.S. Embassy chose the nongovernmental organization CIVITAS-Chad to distribute the kits.

In Abeche, more than 3,000 local students from four local schools, including a high percentage of girls, gathered in a large soccer field in the shadow of the city's main mosque to hear Grand Imam of Chad Hassan Houssein Abakar welcome his American guests. Representatives of Chad's High Islamic Council were also in attendance.

Turning to the American envoy, Abakar said in Arabic, interpreted into French: "Your Excellency, Mr. Ambassador, what you are presenting today will remain written in history. History will record this event and keep it for coming generations."

He said, "It has never happened, in the history of our country, that an ambassador came to the region of Dar Ouaddai [in eastern Chad] to donate 3,000 educational kits for Arabic and bilingual schools."

The American donation, the Muslim cleric added, "attests to the cooperation between Chad and the United States, and shows American support for bilingual education in Chad. The educational kits will help students to improve their scientific and cultural knowledge, and will reinforce the relationship and friendship between Chad and the United States."

Addressing the great number of schoolgirls gathered, the grand imam surprised his audience by declaring: "Let me say that this is the time for the girls of Chad and the women of Chad. From today forward, every girl should go to school. So the High Islamic Council has decided to build a girls' school in the Ouaddai region."

Speaking in French, which was interpreted into Arabic, Wall thanked his hosts for the warm welcome he and his embassy staff received in Abeche.

In addition to its educational value for children, Wall said, the donation "aims to improve [American-African] ties and set down a base for increased friendship through promoting a better

understanding of the people of the United States, as well as an understanding of fundamental human rights such as democracy, freedom and tolerance."

The educational kits are part of the larger U.S. government Shared Futures program, which helps fund education and microenterprise projects among 13 mainly Muslim countries worldwide. As part of the program in Chad, 100 sewing machines also were donated to spur local entrepreneurial activity among women.

The Shared Futures program is a natural fit for Chad, Wall told his Abeche audience, because America and Chad "share fundamental values, such as the health of our families, a solid education for our children and access to a decent life."

As part of its general outreach activities, the United States continues to work closely with the High Islamic Council "to strengthen ties with Chadian Muslims," according to the embassy in N'djamena.

For information on how U.S. foreign assistance is affecting lives, see Partnership for a Better Life (<http://usinfo.state.gov/partnerships/index.html>). For information on U.S. policy in the region, see Africa (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/>).

(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. Officials Call Draft U.N. Detainee Report Flawed, Unbalanced

By David I. McKeeby
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – The draft of a United Nations report on detainees in U.S. custody at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba is flawed, unbalanced, and should be viewed with skepticism, says a top State Department official.

The draft report, said John Bellinger, the department's senior legal adviser, was based on "statements from members of al-Qaida or the Taliban who've been released from Guantanamo." Bellinger briefed reporters in Washington on February 15.

The U. N. envoys who headed the 18-month investigation at the behest of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights declined an offer to visit Guantanamo Bay itself, Bellinger said. Instead, panel members reached their findings by interviewing former detainees, their families and lawyers.

The draft report alleges mistreatment of detainees and recommends closure of the facility.

The detention center opened in 2002 to hold individuals captured in Afghanistan and elsewhere as part of the international war against terrorism.

"The detainees are individuals who we largely captured on the battlefield fighting in Afghanistan or having fled to Pakistan, people who were found and trained in al-Qaida training camps," Bellinger said.

There are currently about 500 detainees at the Guantanamo Bay

facility, according to the U.S. Department of Defense.

To date, approximately 200 individuals have been released or returned to their home country, said Bellinger, who also noted that approximately 10 percent of those released are believed to have re-joined al-Qaida or the Taliban as active combatants.



John Bellinger
State Department Senior Legal Adviser

"I don't know whether we can believe all of the things that they have said. We know that members of al-Qaida have been trained to state that they have been mistreated," Bellinger said.

Bellinger said that U.N. rapporteurs were invited to visit Guantanamo to see the facilities and receive briefings on current operations.

The U.N. representatives rejected the U.S. offer, Bellinger said, because they wanted to be able to interview individual detainees.

Bellinger said that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is the sole organization with authorized access to all of the detainees at Guantanamo.

While acknowledging that the ICRC's reports are confidential, Bellinger said, "President Bush has made clear that he wants Guantanamo to be a transparent place." He said more than 1,000 reporters and several hundred members of Congress personally have visited the detention facility.

"We felt that it would be inappropriate to have multiple organizations all coming down, all to interview the detainees," Bellinger said.

The U. N. group also rejected an offer by the United States to provide briefings in Washington, said Bellinger.

Among the allegations in the report is that the involuntary feeding of detainees on self-imposed hunger strikes amounts to torture.

Bellinger rejected this claim, likening the procedure to that commonly used in hospitals. "Our doctors there are following the highest level of medical ethics and applying exactly the same procedures that they would apply to any American anywhere in the United States," he said.

"Clearly, the report would have been much more balanced and, in fact, objective and accurate had the people actually bothered to come to Guantanamo, or even come to Washington to get the information," Bellinger said.

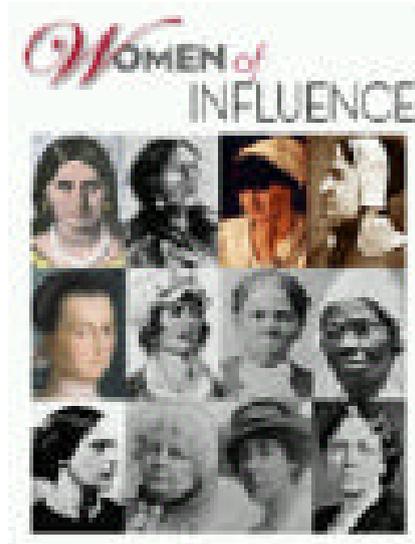
A transcript (<http://fpc.state.gov/fpc/61444.htm>) of the February 15 briefing is available on the Web site of the State Department's Foreign Press Center. ♦

American Women's Achievements Highlighted in New Web Publication

Washington -- A new electronic publication from the State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) chronicles how 12 American women broke new ground, some by championing equal rights for all and others by their accomplishments in fields such as government, literature and even war.

Women of Influence (<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/womeninfln/>), released in time for the celebration of National Women's History Month in March and International Women's Day on March 8, covers significant periods in American history, from colonial times to the 20th century.

The 12 women are introduced in pairs. Short introductory essays provide historical background and are followed by their individual profiles, live links to other pertinent Web sites, and short reading lists. The six mini-chapters are:



"Guiding Lights to a New World" (Sacagawea and Pocahontas),

"The Colonial Era" (Anne Bradstreet and Anne Hutchinson),

"Birth of a Nation" (Abigail Adams and Margaret Corbin),

"Breaking the Chains of Slavery" (Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth),

"A Woman's Right to Vote" (Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony), and

"A Role in Government" (Jeannette Rankin and Hattie Caraway).

The illustrations, in color and black and white, range from artists' renderings of the featured women (portraits and a stained glass window) to historical photographs, coins and newspaper clippings.

IIP intends to expand "Women of Influence" to include other notable women from the United States and other countries.

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

Liberia Seen at "Turning Point" Under President Sirleaf . . .

(Continued from page 6)

said. "That is one of the high priorities of the Sirleaf administration."

Hayes said CCA would like to host a trade mission to Liberia. CCA members are interested, he said, because many American companies currently operating in Africa have been out of Liberia for a long time because of its chronic instability.

Hayes said there is a "unique opportunity" now for investment in Liberia: "What makes it unique is that American business would be

very welcome. They would get strong contracts ... especially in terms of infrastructure and agricultural development. ... It is just wide open to just about any type of business."

Looking to the future, Hayes said, "Right now, I think President Sirleaf offers one of the best hopes for positive change in Africa. It is important that the international community work with Liberia to make it one of Africa's success stories. She is among the few leaders on the continent truly open for change and full accountability of government."

A stable and successful Liberia, he said, also will bring much needed stability to the entire West Africa region.

For additional information about U.S. policy, see Africa (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/>).

(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. Wants New Negotiations on U.N. Human Rights Council

By Judy Aita
Washington File United Nations
Correspondent

United Nations -- The United States wants to reopen negotiations on the draft resolution establishing a United Nations Human Rights Council, U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said February 27.

"My instructions are to reopen the negotiations and to try and correct the manifold deficiencies in the text of the resolution or alternatively to push off consideration of the resolution for several months," Bolton told journalists.

"We are very disappointed with the draft ... we don't think it's acceptable," Bolton said of the draft resolution presented February 23 by General Assembly President Jan Eliasson. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/Archive/2006/Feb/24-241535.html>).

If the General Assembly president brings the resolution to the plenary in the next few days, the ambassador said, the United States "will call for a vote and vote no."

The United States is prepared to stand alone in voting against the draft resolution, Bolton said.

Eliasson has said that he hopes the resolution will be adopted by consensus the week of February 27.

A spokesperson for the General Assembly president said that a number of member states have indicated that they still are awaiting

responses from their capitals to the draft resolution.

Pragati Pascale, the president's spokesman, said Eliasson would not comment on Bolton's remarks



John Bolton
U.S. Ambassador to the U.N.

and has received no formal communication from the United States.

Eliasson, Pascale said, still feels it "is important to move to closure as soon as possible on this issue to enable a smooth transition when the Human Rights Commission meets in March. Reopening negotiations is not likely to produce a better outcome and there is nothing to be gained by waiting."

Bolton said U.S. diplomats are contacting other delegations "making it plain ... we want to reopen the negotiations and have

real international negotiations and correct the deficiencies in the current draft."

"We remain committed to trying to convince other nations that cosmetic reform alone is not sufficient, that we need real change in the way the U.N. decision making mechanism functions," the ambassador said.

"We wanted effective change in the Human Rights Commission, which was obviously broken beyond repair," the U.S. ambassador said.

RECIPE FOR REPEATING MISTAKES OF THE PAST

Mark Lagon, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs, said February 23 that the United States is unwilling "to settle for something that is just a change in name and schedule."

Particularly, the United States wants "to make sure the procedures for electing members and for disqualifying the most bloodthirsty regimes in the world are established so that we turn a page in the history of the Commission on Human Rights -- which has done much good but which has lost credibility by becoming a body of not just firefighters but arsonists."

David Schwarz, who has served as a public delegate on three U.S. delegations to the Commission on Human Rights, said that without setting clear objectives and verifiable membership criteria and requiring a comprehensive review of

(Continued on page 16)

United Nations Must Reform Peacekeeping Operations, Bolton Says

By Judy Aita
Washington File United Nations
Correspondent

United Nations -- A new report criticizing the management of U.N. peacekeeping operations shows "the need for a fundamental shift" in the organization's operating culture, U.S. Ambassador John Bolton says.

Calling on U.N. members to use the report "to chart a new course" of reform, Bolton said February 22 that "the stakes are too high to sweep these problems under the rug."

The problem, Bolton said, involves more than money or integrity. "The discussion we are having today is about saving lives, not only of the civilians we are trying to protect, but the soldiers and civilians of the countries participating in peacekeeping."

"Without accountable, cost-effective, efficient and transparent U.N. procurement practices, the U.N. will not have its essential goods and services, billions of dollars of contributions might be ill spent or not properly accounted and the safety of U.N. peacekeeping operations would be jeopardized," the ambassador said.

Bolton, president of the U.N. Security Council for February, pressed for a public review of the report by the 15-nation council, even though reform is being discussed by the General Assembly's Fifth (Administrative and Budgetary) Committee. The council held a two-hour meeting on waste, fraud and abuse in peacekeeping

procurement on February 22. The meeting will be followed February 23 by a meeting on sexual abuse and exploitation in peacekeeping operations, another issue that has tainted one of the most visible U.N. operations.

AUDIT FINDS CONTROLS, SUPERVISION INADEQUATE

At the heart of the debate is an audit conducted between July 2005 and December 2005 by the U.N. Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on peacekeeping



procurement. The audit sought to identify risks, duplication, fraud, and abuse of authority. The subsequent report, Comprehensive Management Review of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations – Procurement, came out while the United Nations still was reeling from the scathing investigation of U.N. management of the Oil-for-Food Program by an independent commission headed by Paul Volcker. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2006/Jan/25-144222.html>.)

The OIOS found that adequate controls, managerial supervision and strategic guidance have been lacking, thus exposing the United

Nations to serious risk of financial loss. It said that management had not done enough to exercise due diligence and establish high levels of ethics and accountability. The OIOS also found indications of irregularities and conflict of interest with vendors that it said require urgent further investigation.

Bolton said it is time "for a wholesale change" in the way many agencies and entities within the U.N. system operate. "Whether it is a culture of inaction or a culture of impunity, we must see changes," he said.

Acknowledging that the report requires "a very serious response," Mark Mallock Brown, chef de cabinet to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, briefed the council on the report, assuring it that the secretariat will put in place a reform strategy that addresses three distinctly different risks that peacekeeping operations face. These will be unveiled in

March, Brown said.

G-77 OBJECTS TO SECURITY COUNCIL'S INVOLVEMENT

Although all 15 council members and other nations who addressed the council agreed on the seriousness of the issue and the need for reform, there was disagreement on jurisdictional and procedural grounds. Many nations, including those in the Group of 77 (G-77), argued that the U.N. Charter clearly sets out that management and budget issues belong in the General Assembly and that issues already before the General Assembly are not to be brought to the Security Council.

(Continued on page 22)

U.S. Wants Zero Tolerance for Sexual Abuse in U.N. Missions

By Judy Aita
Washington File United Nations
Correspondent

United Nations -- Sexual abuse charges against U.N. peacekeepers remain unacceptably high because of "a culture of dismissiveness," a senior U.N. diplomat told the Security Council February 23.

Even though the number of charges was not unexpected in view of the system now in place to facilitate complaints, Jordanian Ambassador Prince Zeid Raad Zeid Al Hussein said the allegations "still cause us considerable concern."

Al Hussein, a special adviser to the secretary-general, said it is difficult to change "a culture of dismissiveness, long developed within ourselves, in our own countries, and in the mission areas," but he stressed that this cannot be used as an excuse for such abuses.

"We can often legislate a response swiftly when reacting to crises of this sort, but our rate of ... absorbing these changes to the point where we can say we have changed our attitudes, or a culture, is ... a difficult proposition," he said.

U.S. Ambassador John Bolton, president of the Security Council for the month of February, called for the meeting to review the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions, which he calls "one of the greatest stains on U.N. history."

"I think it is important to keep the spotlight on the difficulties posed by this unacceptable practice. I was encouraged by the fact

there was unanimous support in the council for increasing our efforts to prevent this in the first place and to prosecute it when it does occur," Bolton told journalists after the public meeting.

"It is absolutely unacceptable that horrific crimes of sexual abuse and exploitation have been committed by U.N. peacekeepers against individuals they have been assigned to protect," Bolton said. He added that it is the "moral and ethical responsibility" of the United Nations and member governments to prevent such crimes.

"The 'boys will be boys' attitude, which too long pervaded peacekeeping operations, must correctly be met with a zero-tolerance policy," he said.

The United Nations began investigating charges of sexual exploitation by peacekeepers two years ago after reports of abuse surfaced in the Democratic Republic of Congo and West Africa. Charges include rape and enticing hungry children and women with food and money in exchange for sex.

So far allegations have been investigated against 295 peacekeepers. As a result of these investigations, 17 civilians and 137 military personnel – including six commanders – have been dismissed or sent home. The remaining cases still are under investigation.

There are 18 U.N. peacekeeping missions, with more than 85,000 staff members from more than 100 countries.

The United Nations is planning a major operation in Darfur, and "we

do not want to contemplate the potential headlines of U.N. peacekeepers in Darfur raping the very populations that they are entrusted to protect," Bolton said.

Al Hussein reported on actions being taken, a reform program that he estimated will take two years to complete. Legal experts are working on how to deal with U.N. staff diplomatic immunity, as well as enforcement issues among the United Nations, the countries where abuses occur and the governments contributing troops, he said.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan will be releasing a policy statement and comprehensive strategy on assistance to victims that is likely to contain "bold recommendations," Al Hussein added. He asked nations to be aware of "a sense of responsibility toward the victims of U.N. abuse" when adopting those recommendations.

Bolton said that the U.N. reforms must be matched with resolve by individual countries to prevent and punish crimes by their peacekeeping personnel. "Pre- and post-deployment training compliance, adequate living standards for troops, discipline and compensation for victims require commitment and action by troop-contributing countries," he said.

The United States has provided assistance in connection with a related problem, the spread of HIV/AIDS, Bolton added.

The United States has supplied resources and technical assistance for HIV/AIDS education, prevention, counseling, testing and treat-

(Continued on page 16)

U.S. Wants New Negotiations on U.N. Human . . .

(Continued from page 13)

each prospective member's human rights record before elections, the new Human Rights Council "could drift back toward the situation that crippled the commission." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/Archive/2006/Feb/24-241535.html>.)

Leaving key issues unresolved or not addressing the structural problems that led to the dysfunction of the commission "is not a fix or a solution but a recipe for repeating the mistakes of the past," Schwarz said.

The draft resolution would establish a 47-member Human Rights Council elected by a majority of U. N. members. Every new member

would undergo a human rights review.

The United States is pressing for a council of about 30 members elected by a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly.

Lagon said that a two-thirds majority would set "a high bar for election" and boost the credibility of the council's membership. "All candidates, including the U.S., would have to work hard to be elected," he said.

A smaller council than the current 53-member commission "would be more nimble in developing a common vision and taking action," Lagon continued. The United States also would like to see the council meet four times a

year, with extra sessions as needed.

In addition, the United States supports doubling the budget of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights with the additional resources and increased personnel to be used to enhance field operations, Lagon said.

For additional information, see United States and U.N. Reform (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/UNGA_2005.html).

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U.S. Wants Zero Tolerance for Sexual Abuse in . . .

(Continued from page 15)

ment in more than 70 military and peacekeeping missions around the world, reaching 2 million uniformed personnel. It has trained 7,000 uniformed peer-educators, established more than 200 HIV/AIDS counseling and testing facilities on or near military bases, provided HIV/AIDS diagnostic and screening equipment to 30 militaries and trained more than 600 uniformed medical personnel in the care and treatment of HIV-infected personnel and their families, he said.

On February 22, the Security Council discussed procurement problems in peacekeeping missions. The two sessions were part of Bolton's drive to change the organization's operating culture and "chart a new course of reform." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-eng-lish&y=2006&m=February&x=20060222185955AJatiA0.9397547&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html>.)

For additional information, see United States and U.N. Reform (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/>

[international_security/UNGA_2005.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/UNGA_2005.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 Condemns Mosque Bombing, Optimistic About Iraq's Future

By David Shelby
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – President Bush February 24 condemned the bombing of a Shi'a shrine in Samarra, Iraq, as well as subsequent reprisal attacks against mosques and holy sites throughout the country, and he praised the efforts of the Iraqi political leadership and security forces to restore calm.

"This senseless attack is an affront to people of faith throughout the world," Bush told a group of American Legionnaires in Washington. "The United States strongly condemns this cowardly act of terror and the subsequent attacks on other mosques and holy sites in Iraq."

The president said he has been in contact with the U.S. ambassador to Iraq and U.S. military commanders on the ground who assure him that Iraqi leaders and security forces have taken constructive measures to quell the unrest triggered by the February 22 bombing.

Following the attack on the Golden Mosque in Samarra, which houses the tombs of two revered Shi'a imams, many violent protests erupted, and numerous Sunni mosques were attacked in apparent acts of retaliation.

Bush said many Iraqi religious leaders have expressed a commitment to national unity and peace and have called for an end to the civil strife. "The response by the Grand Ayatollah Sistani and many other leaders has been constructive and very important, and we

appreciate their leadership," he said.

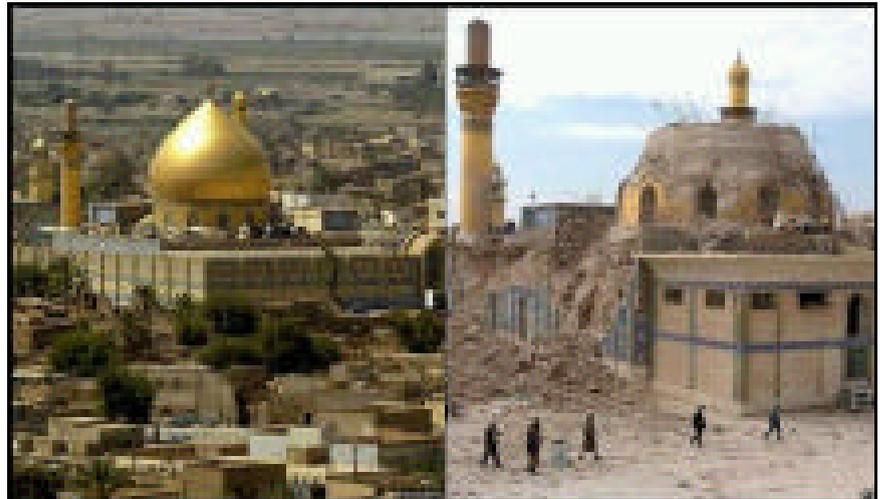
He also praised the Iraqi security forces for their efforts to enforce a curfew and restore order.

Bush said that the situation in Iraq remains serious, but he ex-

pressed optimism that the Iraqi people's desire for democracy will overcome the provocations of the terrorists.

newly elected leaders seek to obtain the constitutionally required two-thirds approval in parliament to form a new government.

He said there would be a period of political bargaining, as is appropriate to a democracy. "Yet out of the negotiations now taking place



The Al Askari Mosque in Samarra before and after the February 2006 bombing.

pressed optimism that the Iraqi people's desire for democracy will overcome the provocations of the terrorists.

"In December, more than 11 million Iraqis sent a clear message to the world and to the terrorists -- they want their freedom. They want their country to be a democracy," he said, in reference to Iraq's December 15, 2005, legislative elections. (See Iraq's Political Process (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq/political_process.html.)

The president said the political process that lies ahead will be "difficult and exhausting," as the

in Iraq, a free government will emerge that will represent the will of the Iraqi people, instead of that of a cruel dictator, and that will help us keep the peace," he said.

For additional information, see Iraq Update (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.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>)◆

General Kimmitt Outlines U.S. Strategy Against Terrorism

By David I. McKeeby
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- While the U.S.-led international military coalition continues to support Iraqi and Afghan efforts to build democratic societies, America also must gear up for the "long war" against terrorism, says Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, deputy director of the U.S. military's Central Command (CENTCOM).

Terrorism "shows no moderation in its behavior and certainly no moderation in its tactics. It shows no moderation in its brutality," Kimmitt told journalists at a February 21 briefing in Washington.

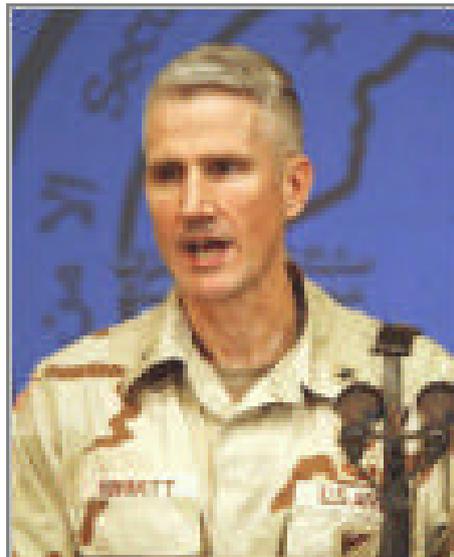
A long war against al-Qaida and similar terrorist groups is a main strategic concept underlying the Quadrennial Defense Review. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=February&x=20060207124716mvyel-warc0.2848932&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html>).

Kimmitt said that groups, such as Ansar-al-Islam in Iraq, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Abu-Sayyaf in the Philippines and others, are not hierarchical, but bound together by a radical, extremist ideology that seeks to push western influences from the region, then eliminate regional authorities that will not conform with their vision of governance and, finally, establish their own repressive regime.

These groups have organized and manifested their power in "the virtual domain," Kimmitt said, ex-

plaining that they actively use the Internet to advertise, recruit and raise funds.

Kimmitt also said that they are known to utilize transnational criminal networks and sympathetic



Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt

nongovernmental organizations to smuggle goods and launder funds. These groups, the general said, "are networked in a way we are not".

Kimmitt described CENTCOM's four key principles to winning the global war against terrorism:

"It takes a network to defeat a network." Kimmitt said that the United States and its allies would build a more capable network to counter terrorists. Internally, this will take the form of continued extensive coordination among the Department of Defense and the departments of State, Treasury, and Homeland Security, as well as the U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies. Externally,

the United States will continue to broaden its alliances and partnerships with other nations.

"Helping other states to help themselves." Kimmitt said the United States would continue to provide military support and training, as well as intelligence support, to help nations build their own capabilities to fight terrorism regionally and within their own countries.

"No sanctuaries or safe havens." In addition to bolstering regional allies to confront terrorists, Kimmitt said that the U.S. military would continue to "get eyes and ears in areas where terrorists might seek sanctuary."

"Reposturing for the long war." Kimmitt said that unlike in the Cold War, the United States does not want to maintain a large presence in CENTCOM's region for longer than is absolutely necessary. Arrayed in an arc from Kenya to Kyrgyzstan, the 27 nations within CENTCOM's area of operations include Iraq, Afghanistan and several other countries central to the war against terrorism. The general said that a significantly smaller force than the 200,000 currently deployed in the CENTCOM area of operations can provide the right kind of assistance to its allies and will prove a far more effective strategy.

Kimmitt concluded that, through these principles, America and its allies "will fight as long as it takes to defeat the scourge of al-Qaida and its associated movements."

"We've seen its handiwork since

(Continued on page 20)

Al-Qaida Leadership Seen as Depleted but Still a Danger

Washington -- Al-Qaida's leadership has been depleted significantly but its top priority remains the planning and execution of attacks within the United States, against U.S. interests overseas and against U.S. allies, members of the intelligence community told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

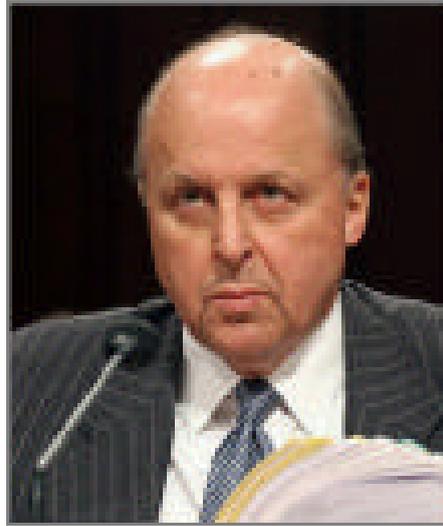
In February 28 testimony before the committee, John Negroponte, U.S. director of national intelligence, joined by General Michael Hayden, principal deputy director of national intelligence, and Lieutenant General Michael Maples, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) outlined the current state of the global war against terrorism.

Al-Qaida and other organizations that make up the "global jihadist" movement remain the most significant threat to U.S. national security, the officials said.

Maples said that al-Qaida now pursues a "decentralized" track, by encouraging other extremist groups, such as Jemmah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia, the Group for Salafist Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in Africa, Ansar al-Islam in Iraq and others.

The panelists agreed that even though conventional explosives remain the terrorists' weapons of choice, many remain interested in acquiring chemical, biological and nuclear weapons for use in future attacks.

"In fact, intelligence reporting indicates that nearly 40 terrorist organizations, insurgencies, or cults have used, possessed, or expressed an interest in chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear



National Intelligence Director John Negroponte testifies before the US Senate Armed Services Committee on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. (AFP/Nicholas Kamm)

agents or weapons," Negroponte said in his prepared statement.

SOPHISTICATED USE OF MEDIA, INTERNET

Maples observed that terrorists are making sophisticated use of media and the Internet to recruit and propagandize.

"Al-Qaida publicized these events with an aggressive propaganda campaign featuring video and audio tapes from senior al-Qaida leadership. Al-Qaida and associated jihadist groups utilize Internet technology for communications and propaganda," Maples said.

Maples also said use of the Internet by terrorists for command and control of terrorist cells is increasing.

"Technology, including e-mail, password-protected chat rooms, and Web sites, is used to communicate and reinforce jihadist ideol-

ogy and promote anti-U.S. sentiment," he said.

Improved security, intelligence and military cooperation with its allies, is one component of America's strategy to defeat al-Qaida and other terrorist groups, said the panelists.

Negroponte praised Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, as well as Spain, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, France and the many other nations the United States claims as allies in the global war against terrorism.

The panelists added that another component is the longer-term strategy to support nations as they work towards building democracies and free markets, which will solve many ingrained social problems that lead to terrorism.

Maples also said "favorable opinions of the U.S. in many Muslim states remain low and are susceptible to changing events."

Negroponte placed terrorism in context of a wider dialogue within the Muslim world over future political and economic development.

"Most Muslims reject the extremists' message, and as they embrace democracy, they will be able to couple it with their beliefs to build a better future," Negroponte said.

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

Nigerian Bird Flu Might Cause Regional Disaster, U.N. Agency Says

Washington -- The deadly bird flu virus continues to spread in poultry in Nigeria and could cause a regional disaster despite strong control efforts taken by Nigerian authorities, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warned in a February 22 press release.

The FAO also called for a poultry vaccination campaign involving thousands of veterinarians and international donor support.

"There is ample evidence that the Nigerian bird flu situation is difficult and worrisome," FAO Chief Veterinary Officer Joseph Domenech said in a statement from the agency's Rome headquarters.

The H5N1 avian influenza virus was discovered in February in Nigeria, the first African occurrence in the current outbreak.

Since December 2003, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, H5 or H5N1 infections in poultry or wild birds have been reported in 30 countries.

Since January 2004, the World Health Organization has reported

human cases of avian flu in seven countries – Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Turkey and Iraq. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2006/Feb/21-108108.html>).

Since the first reports of H5N1 in Asia at the end of 2003, some 170 human cases have been reported, 92 of them fatal, mostly in South-east Asia and China. Human cases so far have been traced to infection directly from diseased birds.

Nearly 200 million domestic birds have died or been culled to contain the spread.

"Considering the possible widespread entrenchment of the disease in poultry," Domenech said, "FAO is advising the government to prepare for a targeted vaccination campaign. Culling and the application of biosecurity measures alone may not stop the spread of the virus."

Nigeria has an estimated poultry population of 140 million. Backyard farmers account for 60 percent of all poultry producers; commercial farmers, 25 percent; and semicommercial farmers, 15 percent.

In Nigeria, vaccination campaigns will require the mobilization of several thousand private and public veterinarians and will need a strong commitment from national and regional authorities and the support of the international donor community for vaccines, cars, vaccination teams and training.

Domenech stressed the importance of compensating farmers for the loss of animals to encourage early reporting of outbreaks and effective application of control measures.

U.N. health officials have warned that the virus could evolve into a lethal human pandemic if it mutates into a form that can transmit easily among people.

The FAO statement (<http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2006/1000238/index.html>) is available on the organization's Web site.

For more information on the disease and efforts to combat it, see Bird Flu (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html). ♦

General Kimmitt Outlines U.S. Strategy Against Terrorism . . .

(Continued from page 18)

9/11 and before in places such as Madrid [Spain], Jeddah [Saudi Arabia], Riyadh [Saudi Arabia], Amman [Jordan], Jakarta [Indonesia], Istanbul [Turkey], and of course, New York, London and Washington D. C.," he said, and reminded the audience that several terrorist organizations publicly have declared their intent to acquire and use chemical,

biological and even nuclear weapons against civilians.

A transcript (<http://fpc.state.gov/fpc/61990.htm>) of Kimmitt's briefing is available on the State Department Foreign Press Center Web site.

For additional information on U.S. policy, see Response to Terrorism (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/>

http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.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>) ♦

USAID Increases Funding for Bird Flu Preparedness

By Kathryn McConnell
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is increasing funding for poor countries' preparations for a potential avian influenza pandemic, agency officials say.

In overall USAID programs, the agency also is expanding its focus on strengthening weak or "fragile states," officials said.

USAID has identified \$2.1 million for bird flu activities, adding to \$15.6 million already committed for the budget year that began October 1, 2005 (fiscal year 2006). The increased financial commitment to bird flu and pandemic prevention comes in response to recently confirmed cases of disease in increasing numbers of nations in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, the agency reports.

USAID officials in Washington on February 22 briefed members of the agency's Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid (ACVFA) on current directions of foreign assistance, including aid for bird flu preparedness.

STRENGTHENING FLU SURVEILLANCE AND LOCAL EDUCATION

U.S. funds earmarked for bird flu are being used to strengthen animal and human disease surveillance, train and equip the people who would be the first responders to a national flu crisis and teach farmers and bird sellers about what they can do to identify flu symptoms and reduce the spread of the disease, said Dennis Carroll, USAID senior infectious disease adviser.

Booming growth in human and poultry populations and the proximity of people and livestock in backyard farms common to many developing countries could create a high probability of viruses transmitting from live birds to people, Carroll said.

The unregulated marketing of birds in the developing world and the movements of migratory birds are other "driving forces" behind the spread of the disease, he said.

In the two-year-old outbreak of avian influenza, the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus has caused the death or destruction of an estimated 200 million birds. More than 170 people have contracted the disease; over 90 of them have died. International health officials warn that the virus could mutate to become contagious among people, causing rapidly spreading disease among humans who lack immunity to this strain of influenza.

To prevent that from happening, a nation must organize a national response to disease within three weeks of an outbreak of bird flu, Carroll said.

In implementing an effective response to the threat of an bird flu pandemic, USAID and nongovernmental groups need to bring together workers from different fields, such as those devoted to agriculture, health, infrastructure and communications, Carroll said.

In addition, aid providers must develop programs to compensate farmers for killing and disposing birds suspected of being infected, he added.

These providers also need to help countries obtain and pre-position stockpiles of anti-virals, personal protective equipment and other items, such as soap.

"We need to build a fire hydrant before the fire," Carroll said of the need for investing in preparedness.

In a related measure, ACVFA has created an avian influenza task force to keep its members informed of bird flu developments in poor countries, said Nancy Aosse, a member of the task force and president of the International Medical Corps, a global non-profit humanitarian organization with headquarters in Santa Monica, California.

The United States has undertaken a number of actions to help developing countries contend with bird flu outbreaks. (See related article. (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2006/Feb/13-184848.html>))

ENHANCING STABILITY OF FRAGILE STATES

USAID officials also discussed foreign assistance goals and programs in general at the meeting.

For the fiscal year that begins October 1, USAID is requesting \$50 million for "transition initiatives" that include help for fragile states. This is a \$10 million increase over funding provided for the initiative for the current fiscal year, according to James Painter, deputy assistant administrator for policy and program coordination.

USAID's fragile state strategy is intended to enhance stability, im-

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United Nations Must Reform Peacekeeping Operations, Bolton Says . . .

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The G-77, which describes itself as "the largest Third World coalition in the United Nations," seeks to provide the developing world with the means to "articulate and promote its collective economic interests and enhance its joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues in the United Nations system," according to its Web site.

Nevertheless, Bolton called the Security Council meeting on the issue important and significant. It shows "unanimous support for continued reform in the U.N. system to correct the abuses," he said. "The number of people attending shows how seriously the issue is taken."

The ambassador said that the United States sees the Security Council as a forum where action can be taken. "We authorize peacekeep-

ing missions. We write the resolutions that create them. We can take steps in those resolutions or elsewhere," he said.

The council meeting was not a means to impede the work of the General Assembly, Bolton added. "We'd welcome General Assembly debate on the subject. . . . Let's see the debate going in other bodies."

For additional information, see United States and U.N. Reform (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/UNGA_2005.html).

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USAID Increases Funding for Bird Flu Preparedness . . .

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prove security, encourage reforms and develop institutional capabilities in vulnerable countries, many of which are in Africa, according to officials in the agency's Africa bureau.

As part of the strategy, USAID is working more with U.S. military personnel on transition projects -- projects previously considered "strictly development." These include such projects as building schools and improving infrastructures, said Wade Warren, the USAID Africa bureau's director of development planning.

The military also can help USAID and nongovernmental partners build up local institutions, said Chris Hoh, director for response strategy and resource management

at the U.S. State Department.

In coordination with the State and Defense departments, USAID is providing training to military forces assigned to these efforts, said Warren.

Other USAID strategic goals include promoting "transformational development," or fundamental changes in governance, economic structures and use of human resources. The agency believes that "reasonably stable" developing countries eventually can sustain economic growth and social progress without depending on foreign aid.

The agency's aid goals include helping countries that are strategically important to the United States; providing humanitarian assistance; and addressing such is-

issues as HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, climate change, biodiversity, and support for international trade agreements and counternarcotics efforts.

ACVFA was established after World War II to serve as a link between the U.S. government and private voluntary organizations involved in international aid.

For additional information on U.S. and international bird flu programs, see Bird Flu (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html).

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