



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

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U.S. Ambassador Don Yamamoto Launches PEPFAR Small Grants Program for Indigenous NGOs

On Thursday, February 8, 2007, U.S. Ambassador Don Yamamoto visited *Hope for Children*, one of six community organizations chosen by PEPFAR/Ethiopia as the first recipients of the Small Grants to Community-Based Organizations Program under U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).



Ambassador Yamamoto is greeted by Woizero Yewoineshet Masresha, Executive Director of Hope for Children, and Girum Abdo, one of the center's children as he arrives at the center.

A key activity of PEPFAR is the expansion of work with new partners, particularly nongovernmental, community-based and faith-based organizations in an effort to broaden

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Leadership at Camp Lemonier, Djibouti Changing Hands

CAMP LEMONIER, DJIBOUTI – Rear Adm. James Hart, U.S. Navy, assumes command of Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa during a change of command ceremony Feb. 14.

Admiral Hart, a 31-year Navy veteran, assumes command from Rear Adm. Richard Hunt, who has led the command since April 2006. Following a successful 10-

month tour, Admiral Hunt has been reassigned to the Pentagon as director of surface warfare, N-86, in the office of the chief of naval operations.

A native New Yorker, Admiral Hart assumes command of an organization with a mission to conduct unified action in the Horn of Africa to prevent conflict, promote regional stability and protect coalition interests. CJTF-HOA

does this through humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and civic action programs to include medical and veterinary care, school and medical clinic construction, and water development projects.

Media advisory: Any media wanting to cover the event must contact Maj. Dave Malakoff or Capt. Tony Wickman at 253.358997, or via e-mail at cjtfhoa-pao@hoa.centcom.mil. ♦

U.S. Ambassador Don Yamamoto Launches PEPFAR Small Grants Program . . .

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services and foster sustainability. As part of this effort PEPFAR/Ethiopia created the Small Grants to Community-Based Organizations Program. This program funds communities and faith-based organizations to carry out small-scale projects to assist in HIV prevention or provide care and support to persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and/or children orphaned or affected by AIDS. Grants range from ETB 8,500 to 260,000 (US \$1,000-\$30,000).

Hope for Children received a grant of USD 55,572 (ETB 491,000) (with a match contribution of 21,782 USD (ETB 192,500), for its Lafto Care and Support Project, located in Nefas Silk Lafto Subcity, Addis Ababa. This project will provide HIV/AIDS peer education through puppet shows and community volunteer educators and



Puppeteers and Children

scouts, and will work with individuals and families affected by the HIV/AIDS by providing grief counseling and home-based care. Beneficiaries are 200 orphans and vulnerable children and 7,080 adults.

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief Small Grants Programs was created to make funds available for U.S. Ambassadors to support local projects developed with

extensive community involvement, targeted at specific needs of the host country, and developed in coordination with local non-governmental organizations and municipalities. This year's group of grant recipients, which includes six indigenous NGOs in Addis Ababa and other parts of Ethiopia, is the first group to receive small grants under the PEPFAR/Ethiopia program.

The six grantees of PEPFAR's 2006 Small Grants to Community-Based Organizations Program are Addis Hiwot Center for the Blind, Bahir Dar Medhanealem Orphans & Destitute Family Support and Training Center, Dorcas Aid International Ethiopia, Hope for Children Organization, Hope for the Blind and Handicapped Rehabilitating Association, and Mekdim Ethiopia National Association (Shashemene Branch). The six groups have received a total of 143,649 USD or 1,249,752 ETB in individual grants. ♦



Warm Reception for the Ambassador



Ambassador Yamamoto has a word with the scout team

U.S. Creating New Africa Command To Coordinate Military Efforts

By Vince Crawley
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The Defense Department is creating a new U.S. Africa Command headquarters, to be known as AFRICOM, to coordinate all U.S. military and security interests throughout the continent, the Bush administration announced February 6.

"This new command will strengthen our security cooperation with Africa and create new opportunities to bolster the capabilities of our partners in Africa," President Bush said in a White House statement. "Africa Command will enhance our efforts to bring peace and security to the people of Africa and promote our common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa."

Until now, U.S. military involvement in Africa has been shared among the U.S. European Command, the U.S. Central Command and the U.S. Pacific Command. Defense Secretary Robert Gates called this divided responsibility "an outdated arrangement left over from the Cold War."

Creating AFRICOM "will enable us to have a more effective and integrated approach than the current arrangement of dividing Africa between [different regional commands]," Gates said February 6 before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Bush has ordered that AFRICOM be created by September 30, 2008. At that time, the command will be headed by a top-ranking, four-star military officer who will serve on equal footing with other regional U.S. commanders around the globe.

In his White House statement, Bush said the United States plans to consult with African leaders "to seek their thoughts on how Africa Command can respond to security chal-



A U.S. Marine helps a local boy open a military food ration in Riongo, Kenya.

lenges." He also said the United States "will work closely with our African partners to determine an appropriate location for the new command in Africa."

The transition team for the new command temporarily is operating in Stuttgart, Germany, which is also home to the headquarters of U.S. European Command. The Defense Department would like, however, eventually to locate the command headquarters in an African nation.

Officials are beginning to discuss possible permanent headquarters locations and are determining what kinds of military forces, if any, would be assigned permanently to AFRICOM, said Navy Rear Admiral Robert Moeller, of U.S. Central Command, who is director of the AFRICOM transition team.

The Defense Department uses its

unified regional commands to coordinate military interests worldwide. Senior U.S. officers serve as diplomats and, if necessary, regional combat commanders. Currently, the

U.S. Central Command coordinates military efforts in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and Central Asia; the U.S. European Command coordinates much of sub-Saharan Africa and Europe; U.S. Northern Command coordinates North America; U.S. Southern Command coordinates South America, Central America and the Caribbean; and U.S. Pacific Command coordinates East Asia and

South Asia, as well as the Indian Ocean islands off the coast of southeast Africa.

The new AFRICOM eventually will encompass the entire continent of Africa except for Egypt, which falls under U.S. Central Command. AFRICOM also will include the islands of Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe, and the Indian Ocean islands of Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles.

By creating AFRICOM, the Defense Department will be able to coordinate better its own activities in Africa as well as help coordinate the work of other U.S. government agencies, particularly the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development, said Moeller, the AFRICOM transition team director.

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U.S. Looks to Envoys' Visit To Help Break Darfur Stalemate

By Judy Aita

USINFO United Nations Correspondent

United Nations -- Frustrated with the lack of progress in getting a U.N. peacekeeping mission into the troubled Darfur region of Sudan, Acting U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Alejandro Wolff says that the Security Council is looking to the upcoming visit of international envoys to break the stalemate with the Sudanese government.

The Security Council met with U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon February 6 to discuss the inability of the United Nations and the African Union to get Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to agree to a 20,000-strong hybrid United Nations/African Union (AU) peacekeeping force. Ban just returned from attending the AU summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he met with the Sudanese leader.

Ban announced that U.N. Special Envoy Jan Eliasson and AU Special Envoy Salim Ahmed Salim will visit Sudan's capital, Khartoum, and Darfur February 11-17. Ban will return to the council after those visits to discuss the next steps based on the envoys' recommendations.

Ban said he told Bashir he wanted a speedy deployment of the so-called phase three of the hybrid force. The secretary-general said he hopes the political process will be "re-energized" by the envoys' visit.

Nevertheless, Wolff said that he felt "a general sense of frustration" from the 15-nation Security Council.

"We have been dealing with this for many, many months," Wolff said



United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon (R) meets with Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir in Addis Ababa, January 2007. Photo: Don Emmert/AFP

after the closed-door Security Council meeting. "We continue to find ourselves stymied by questions and stalling tactics on the part of Sudan government."

Wolff pointed out that the United Nations and African Union have devised a three-phase process that Bashir agreed to in December 2006, but the Sudanese president continues to delay its implementation with questions.

The United Nations has deployed about 25 military staff officers and 20 police advisers as part of a "light support package" for the thinly stretched African Union Mission in Darfur where more than 200,000 people have been killed since 2003 and more than 2 million have been displaced by fighting between gov-

ernment and rebel groups.

Under a \$21 million light support package, the United Nations is to provide 105 military staff officers, 33 police advisers and 48 civilian staff as well as equipment and supplies to the AU peacekeepers.

Phase three of the plan will establish a hybrid AU-U.N. force of 17,000 troops and 3,000 police advisers.

The secretary-general told the Security Council he is committed to making Darfur a top priority and to working with the AU to come up with a coordinated approach so the United Nations is ready to deploy when the AU mandate expires in June, Wolff said.

The Security Council "will reinforce our commitment to see this issue dealt

with" through diplomatic means, the ambassador said.

"There is a sense of frustration and coalescence within the council that the time is running out and we need to move forward," Wolff said.

When he took office, Ban said he intended to be "directly and personally engaged" on Darfur.

According to his spokesperson, Michele Montas, Ban told the Security Council February 6 that "no more time can be lost. The people of Darfur have waited for far too long." ♦

USAID Helps Bring Lights Back to Democratic Republic of Congo

Political unrest and war destroyed much of the infrastructure in north-eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The lack of electricity in particular contributed to the continuing struggle of everyday life, paralyzing the area's economic recovery.

Kasenyi was one of many towns lacking electricity. That changed, however, when power was finally restored as a result of the combined efforts of local residents, the local electric company and a program sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) called Synergie d'Education Communautaire et d'Appui (SE*CA). Thirty-two miles of electrical wire were installed and electrical connections prepared for use.

SE*CA procured the wiring and other materials and area communities contributed labor. It was a coordinated, multi-ethnic, voluntary effort that reflected positively on the communities and increased the level of security in the region.

The power lines have helped reactivate public services for 50,000 people, allowing vital commercial and social activities to resume. For instance, fisheries can now operate

their fish freezers again.

Implemented by USAID through its U.S. partner, Chemonics, SE*CA promotes improved stability in areas affected by war by facilitating local,

It also uses a media program that supports access to information about issues key to the transition, and a small-grants program that



The electrification program in Kasenyi used local labor as the community contribution to the long-needed power project.

regional and national understanding of issues that are key to a country's political transition.

The program helps war-affected youth adjust to life after conflict by providing education and skills training in agriculture, health, conflict management, reconciliation, personal values, numeracy and literacy.

supports activities identified by the community that focus on its economic, political and social revitalization.

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

U.S. Creating New Africa Command To Coordinate Military Efforts . . .

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U.S. government officials also will be able to "work much more closely with our African partners across the continent," Moeller said, adding that nations in the region long have requested a separate U.S. command focused on African issues.

Ambassador Robert Loftis, a senior

basing negotiator for the State Department, said U.S. military commands and other government agencies already perform a wide variety of work with African nations. By creating AFRICOM, Loftis said, "what we're really talking about is taking all of those activities that are already being done and consolidating them all under one command."

For more information on U.S. policy, see Africa: Peace and Security (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>) ♦

First Muslim in U.S. Congress Speaks on Faith and Democracy

By Lea Terhune
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Minnesota Representative Keith Ellison is surprised that his Muslim faith became an issue during his successful campaign for a congressional seat.

“I never bring it up,” he told US-INFO, although he discusses it when asked. His first impulse was to downplay religion in favor of discussing the issues, which are his priority. Now he freely discusses Islam, “because it may have the effect of building understanding. I hope it does.”

Ellison, a Democrat and the first Muslim elected to the U.S. Congress, says he was elected for his values. “I have to continue to elevate the common good, the public interest, education, health, peace. These are the things that they want me to work on,” he said. By electing him, he said, his constituents meant, “We don’t really care what your religion is. This is what we are into, if you can promote and execute and advocate these things, you can represent us.” (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=November&x=20061109140830mlenuhret7.070559e-02>).

His values derive from his Christian upbringing and Islam, which he has practiced for nearly 25 years. “The values that underlie Islam are not unique to Islam. They are shared by all faith traditions. Belief in charity, in giving to others in need and facing adversity, the belief in equality and justice -- there is no religion, including Islam, that has a monopoly on these ideas,” he said.

Ellison said true Islamic values harmonize with the democratic proc-

ess. “These are universal ideas. In fact, they’re not just compatible with democracy; they drive us toward a society in which there is consultation, in which there is input



Minnesota Representative Keith Ellison

and approval from the populace.” He asks, “How can you have a just society where one person or only a limited set of people make the laws for their benefit and yet other people who had no role in making the law have to abide by it? That’s fundamentally unjust.”

He quoted from memory a Quranic verse, Surah 49:13: “Oh humanity, we created you from a single pair, male and female, and fashioned you into tribes and nations, so that you would know each other and get to know each other and not hate and despise each other. Surely the most honored among you is the one who is most righteous and just.”

“Now that is an English translation of the Quran which essentially affirms the equality of men and women,” he said. Diversity often brings conflict “as we engage in chauvinistic attitudes,” he said, but actually is meant to “spark our curiosity about the difference so we would get to know each other. And the differences are not so that we would find ways to oppress and degrade each other.

“[I]t doesn’t say the most honored man among you, or the most honored whites or the most honored blacks among you, or Asians or even Muslims,” he explained. “It really is an inclusive idea, the intention of the Divine for us to treat each other well, to be curious and inquiring, not to ... make distinctions among each other

based on sex, race, gender, tribe and things like that. And it says explicitly, in my mind, that this injunction is not only to Muslims but to all people, all humanity.”

“This is fundamental to Islam and fundamental to democracy,” he said. Likewise, he added, the Quran says religion is a matter of choice and not compulsion. “It should be free, voluntary and open.”

When mutual respect and justice are replaced by dictatorship, he said, “It just means that we are putting our desire for domination, power, money, hegemony above

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U.S. Police Work To Build Trust with Muslim Populations

By Carolee Walker
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- There are 94 mosques in Houston, and Muzaffar Siddiqi, a local police officer, has visited them all. Siddiqi's efforts to build trust, one mosque at a time, are typical of recent work by police in cities across the United States.

Police officers want Muslims in their cities to know they can live and pray there just like any resident.

There is fear of police in some Muslim countries, and many Muslims in the United States have to be taught to trust law enforcement, said Siddiqi. In Pakistan, for example, where Siddiqi was born and where he is helping to build a police station, people often do not seek out help from police officers; instead, they hide from them.

In the United States, police officers need the trust of law-abiding citizens, including Muslims, to do their jobs protecting people and communities from criminals.

"I recognize the importance of reaching out to our city's Muslim population," Houston police Chief Harold Hurtt told USINFO.

Siddiqi said police training in the United States long has required diversity seminars educating cadets about the customs and traditions of people from many cultures living side by side. After the terrorist attacks in the United States by Muslim extremists on September 11, 2001, Siddiqi realized his Houston

Police Department needed to do more both to educate officers about Muslims and to convince the Muslim community that police officers were there to protect them.



Officer Muzaffar Siddiqi

Now, Siddiqi regularly visits Houston's Islamic Dawah Center, where he meets with members of the Muslim community to address problems and concerns. And once a week, Siddiqi sits at a table at the Arab-American Community Center to provide resi-

dents with resources and educate them about the law-enforcement process.

"We've encouraged the Muslim community to establish a line of communication with the Houston Police Department," Siddiqi told USINFO.

BUILDING BRIDGES IN CITIES WITH ARAB-AMERICAN POPULATIONS

Dearborn, Michigan, which has one of the largest Arab populations outside the Middle East, with nearly 40,000 Arab Americans, established its community-policing center in the heart of the Arab-American commercial and residential district in the late 1990s. Since then, the Dearborn

Police Department has developed strong relationships within the Arab community, from religious leaders to business owners to neighborhood associations, Dearborn police Chief Michael Celeski told USINFO.

After September 11, "we were able to reach out and personally meet with community leaders and assure them that the city and the police would be working together to protect them from retaliation," Celeski said. Dearborn police officers are required to attend cultural diversity training sessions every year, Celeski said, with the focus on different ethnic groups changing depending on the issues in the city.

Police Chief Rob Davis of San Jose, California, realized his department could benefit from building trust among the 7,000 Muslims who live in his community, so he made a commitment to fast during Ramadan in 2006. Davis, a Mormon, observed the monthlong fast by giving up food and drink from sunrise to sunset and by breaking his nightly fast among his Muslim neighbors.

"Everyone needs to know that the chief is the chief for everybody -- not just the majority, not just for those in power," Davis said in published reports. "I need to be a chief

for everybody, particularly for those who've felt marginalized."

"The key is you have to find a common denominator," said U.S. federal agent Dave Gaubatz, who works with the Texas Department of Public Safety to train

its troopers with a basic knowledge of Islam and Middle Eastern customs. "I knew what we had to do was unite law enforcement with the Muslim community to fight the War on Terror," said Gaubatz in news

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San Jose Police Chief Rob Davis

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the Divine injunction that we should love ye one another, love your neighbor as yourself."

African Americans long have been attracted to Islam. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=June&x=20050630112138cpataruK0.9474909>).)

As to why, Ellison offered, "[T]here are certain inescapable American realities to look at. People want to be affirmed in their humanity. And during Jim Crow, I think it's fair to say it was not affirming of African-American humanity." So-called Jim Crow laws institutionalized inequality, segregating blacks from whites, a situation the civil rights move-

ment fought to rectify.

His Minneapolis constituency includes diverse ethnic groups, among them the largest Somali immigrant community in America, but the people who voted him into office are "overwhelmingly white and Christian," descendants of Norwegians, Swedish and German immigrants.

When asked who has inspired him in his public service, he immediately named the late Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone, who worked to involve young people, the poor and minorities in politics.

Although he admires Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, John Brown and John F. Kennedy, he said, "I

never met those people." He knew Wellstone. "I saw a real life, practical example of somebody who could combine community, grassroots activism and electoral politics," he continued.

"I used to think if you get elected to office that you couldn't maintain your value system. You'd get into that meat grinder and get chewed up. You'd end up something else from what you went in. But he proved it's not true. You can do the right thing."

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U.S. Police Work To Build Trust with Muslim Populations . . .

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reports.

Such unity was found at a highly publicized meeting in August 2006 between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Imam Sheik Reda Shata at a Brooklyn youth center. Nearly a year had passed since the FBI charged two Muslims who prayed at Shata's mosque with plotting terrorist acts. According to newspaper reports, Shata told the agents that Muslims care about keeping the country safe.

CONNECTING WITH IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Reaching out to West African and Muslim communities in New York

beyond law enforcement became a goal of the police department there, and in January, Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly appointed Imam Erhan Yildirim of the Fathi Mosque in Brooklyn as the department's outreach coordinator to Muslim residents.

Siddiqi, the Houston Police Department's liaison to Houston's South Asian and Middle Eastern communities, said this kind of outreach in immigrant communities is essential to law enforcement, and his department regularly organizes luncheons for local refugees from Somalia, Sudan, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Cuba and the former Soviet Union.

Local businesses donate food, and members of the Islamic Society of

Greater Houston, Interfaith Ministries, Catholic Charities and the Alliance Multicultural Center use the opportunity to help refugees with job training, English-language skills and familiarity with law-enforcement processes.

For additional information on life in the United States, see Population and Diversity. (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/population_and_diversity.html)

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Muslim Rappers Use "Voice of Youth" To Promote Tolerance

By Carolee Walker
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The root cause of intolerance is ignorance, says Naeem Muhammad of Native Deen, a popular Muslim American hip-hop music group. "The more we learn about each other the more tolerant we will be."

The members of Native Deen argue that Islam always has been a tolerant religion and say that because Islam does not favor one culture over another, it is possible to educate both Western and Middle Eastern audiences about being Muslim in America through the language of hip-hop.

"When we perform in Western countries, people see a positive image of Islam," said Native Deen member Joshua Salaam in a USINFO webchat February 1. "When we perform in Muslim countries, we are also promoting tolerance because some people believe that every person in the West is bad. There are a lot of good Muslims living in the West -- and good people in general."

Native Deen traveled in fall 2006 to London, Turkey, Dubai, the Palestinian Territories and Israel on behalf of the U.S. Department of State, incorporating the teachings of Islam into songs about respect and humanity. In Dubai, Native Deen won the 2006 Mahabba Award at an event showcasing musicians, artists and filmmakers inspired to spread Islam through art. "Deen" is the Arabic word for "religion," or way of life, and many of the lyrics in the group's raps use both English and Arabic words.

"You would think that because our style is hop-hop that we would frequently get trouble from clerics,"



The Muslim-American rap group Native Deen visits religious and historic sites in Turkey, Dubai and Israel while on tour. (Native Deen)

Salaam said. But, in fact, everywhere Native Deen performs, the group is embraced by Islamic scholars and leaders, Salaam said. The group bases its raps on the teachings of the Quran, and because some Muslims believe that wind and string instruments should be avoided in Islam, the group uses only percussion instruments.

As African Americans growing up in America, Salaam said, they viewed hip-hop as their language, so when the group expresses itself musically, "it comes out as hip-hop." Hip-hop came from the West but has origins in the East, he said, and now it is the voice of youth around the world. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/Archive/2006/May/12-522164.html>)).

"Life is what inspires us to write the way we do," Salaam said. "Our

target audience in the beginning was Muslim youth. Now we write for anyone who wants to be inspired and loves good music. We are finding now that Muslims and non-Muslims love our music."

The world has used music as a bridge to other cultures and to one another for centuries, according to Salaam.

"We have fans from all age groups and from all ethnic groups," he said. "It is the positive message that brings people together."

The transcript (http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/USINFO/Products/Webchats/native_deen_01_feb_2007.html) of Native Deen's discussion and information on upcoming webchats are available on US-INFO's Webchat Station

(<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Products/Webchats.html>).

For more information on U.S. society, see Population and Diversity (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/population_and_diversity.html) and International Religious Freedom (http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/human_rights/intl_religious_freedom.html).

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Internet Enables Americans to Watch Congress in Action

By Michelle Austein
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The Internet has enhanced opportunities for Americans to learn about their legislative branch and interact with their congressional leaders by allowing them to access texts of laws and watch the decision-making process in action.

Those interested in seeing the current work of the legislative branch can find this information on congressional Web pages. The U.S. House of Representatives Web site publishes a weekly schedule and a list of upcoming hearings, as does the (<http://www.senate.gov/>) Senate Web site. The Senate Web site also publishes a list of all votes taken in the chamber.

Many congressional committees broadcast live video of their hearings via their Web pages. Several media outlets also show live video of votes and debates taking place on the House and Senate floors. One of the most well-known of these outlets is C-Span, a private, nonprofit cable channel that provides live television coverage of the House and Senate to 86 million American homes. C-Span's Web site also offers real-time video.

With hearings being webcast and reports and testimony available online in real time, Internet communication likely has resulted in better accountability by the legislative branch, Dennis Johnson, George Washington University associate professor of political management told USINFO. Johnson is the author of the book, *Congress Online: Bridging the Gap Between Citizens and Their Representatives*. The Internet also has changed the way Americans can interact with

their elected leaders, Johnson said. Nearly every elected representative has a Web site that allows constituents to send messages.

Some technologically savvy legislators have Web sites that allow them to communicate with their constituents through policy-specific e-mails and use video webcasts for online "town hall meetings" (public assemblies), Johnson said.

"These members understand the truly revolutionary nature of online communication and see it as a positive tool to reach out to constituents," he said.

For example, the Web site of Senator Tom Carper, a Democrat from Delaware, allows constituents to learn more about Carper's position on key issues; search the text of bills; see what is scheduled for action on the Senate floor on a given day; read the congressman's blog (online personal journal); and keep up to date on Carper's work by signing up to receive press releases via e-mail.

Constituents of Representative Christopher Shays, a Republican from Connecticut, also can sign up for e-mail news and search legislation. They can also go to his Web site to read a list of his latest votes and participate in an online poll.

Both Shays and Carper have won awards for their Web sites from the Congressional Management Foundation, a nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting an effective Congress.

Online communication has been a positive force in the interchanges between congressional members and their constituents and allows legislators to communicate with

citizens at a vastly reduced cost, when used properly, according to Johnson. He added, however, that not everyone has access to computers or feels comfortable using the Internet for communication.

"The more we become comfortable with online communication, in the next decade or so, and, hopefully, the more it becomes universal, then there could be a much better impact between constituents and their legislators," Johnson said.

Congressional bills are also accessible through U.S. government Web sites. Thomas, a Library of Congress Web site, was launched in January of 1995 to make federal legislative information freely available to the public.

On the Thomas Web site, users can locate the text or summary of laws, bills and resolutions dating back to 1973; congressional voting records; and lists of congressional members and the legislation they have sponsored. The Web site also provides daily summaries of congressional activities.

More information about the legislative process is available at the U.S. House of Representatives (<http://www.house.gov/>), U.S. Senate (<http://www.senate.gov/>), C-Span (<http://www.cspan.org/>), and Thomas (<http://www.thomas.gov/>) Web sites.

For more information on U.S. policy, see U.S. Congress (<http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/congress.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/>) ♦

Pentagon Seeks Nearly \$500 Billion for 2008 Defense Budget

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – The Defense Department has submitted a \$481.4 billion request to Congress to support operations around the world and in cyberspace for the fiscal year beginning October 1 (FY08).

Actual defense spending will be substantially larger as the request also includes a second 2007 supplemental request of \$93.4 billion to cover military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan so the military services do not run out of money by April. An earlier supplemental request was granted by Congress for \$70 billion.

The Pentagon also estimates it will need an additional \$141.7 billion in 2008 to continue sustaining military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the global war on terrorism, with nearly \$40 billion of the sum earmarked for replacing or repairing equipment destroyed or damaged in combat.

Iraq and Afghanistan are central to the U.S. counterterrorism strategy, with a request for \$2 billion to help Iraqi forces become self-reliant and \$2.7 billion for Afghan security force improvements. Around \$20 billion is being sought to defeat or protect against roadside bombs.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates told reporters at the Pentagon February 5 the new budget makes needed strategic investments, improves military readiness, recalibrates deployments overseas, and funds anti-terrorism operations not only in Afghanistan and Iraq but “elsewhere in the ongoing campaign against violent jihadist networks around the globe.”

He said the defense budget should be funded “at the level to adequately meet the challenges of the global strategic environment the United States faces today.”

PROCUREMENT

More than a third of the new budget is set aside for strategic modernization to develop future combat capabilities and equipment. The Pentagon plans to spend \$176.8 billion to give the Navy eight more vessels, including three new combat ships and a new generation aircraft carrier; buy more aircraft, such as the Joint Strike Fighter; supply the Army with new combat vehicles; and invest further in the successful use of Predator unmanned aerial vehicles.

This year’s Missile Defense Agency request accounts for almost \$9 billion to improve existing land- and sea-based missile defense systems and develop new ones.

GREATER MANPOWER REQUIREMENTS

The Army and the Marine Corps will see active duty manpower levels increase by 92,000 over the next four fiscal years. The Army will grow by 65,000 from 482,400 to 547,400 soldiers in 2012, allowing the number of brigade combat teams to increase from 42 to 48.

The Marine Corps will be able to complete its 3rd Expeditionary Force by 2011 by adding 27,000 Marines, growing from a force level of 175,000 to 200,000 soldiers.

2007 SUPPLEMENTAL REQUEST

The 2007 supplemental request would allocate \$3.8 billion to help train and equip Iraqi security forces

as the size of the force grows from 328,000 to 362,000 members. It also would bolster Iraq’s Air Force counterinsurgency capabilities and strengthen the Iraqi navy’s ability to conduct patrols.

Nearly \$6 billion is sought to support Afghan security forces by speeding up the development of the Afghan national army and police. Some of this money would also be used for training and equipping Afghan security forces, which will grow to around 152,000 members by the end of the fiscal year. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=January&x=20070122101921sjhtrop0.4692194>).)

The 2007 supplemental request calls for spending \$10.4 billion to field advanced technology and protection against deadly improvised explosive devices that have been used by hostile forces in Iraq, and, more recently in Afghanistan. It will fund a special task force to look at gear such as a new generation of protective body suits.

The full transcript (<http://www.defenselink.mil/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=3881>) of the briefing is available on the Defense Department Web site.

For more information on U.S. policies, see *Rebuilding Afghanistan* (http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/rebuilding_afghanistan.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>) ♦

Budget Plan Includes Increase for Millennium Challenge Aid

By Kathryn McConnell and Jon Schaffer
USINFO Staff Writers

Washington -- President Bush has sent Congress a proposed \$20.3 billion budget for foreign assistance during fiscal year 2008, which begins October 1.

The funding request is part of the president's \$2.9 trillion budget plan submitted to Congress February 5. Congress must approve the president's proposals and can modify the specific amounts requested. In turn, the president must approve the final appropriations bills that Congress passes.

The budget proposal calls for \$3 billion for the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) for promoting sustainable economic growth and reducing poverty in some of the world's poorest countries.

MCC Chief Executive Officer John Danilovich, in a statement, said an increase is warranted. In fiscal year 2007, Congress allocated \$1.8 billion for the three-year-old MCC program.

"We now have 11 compacts and 11 threshold programs in place totaling \$3.3 billion," Danilovich said. The threshold program helps countries become eligible for longer-term compacts, or agreements for results-oriented, multiyear projects.

An inability to respond to proposals from partner countries because of funding cuts, he said, would "undermine, perhaps irreparably, the incentive MCC assistance provides to countries to enact major political, social and economic reforms."

Speaking at the Center for Strategic and International Studies the same day, Randall Tobias, director of U.S. foreign assistance, said the fiscal

2008 budget proposal provides for a 20 percent increase in resources for low- and lower-middle-income countries over 2006 levels and a 54 percent increase in assistance to Africa.

"There's a 4 percent increase for the Near East as a vital investment in winning the global War on Terror and empowering the people of this critical region," he said.

"There's a 6 percent increase in South and Central Asia, highly concentrated in states like Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are of critical importance to our national security and are also among the very poorest nations in that region."

Since President Bush took office, Tobias said, aid to Western Hemisphere countries will have increased, from \$862 million to \$1.66 billion if the current foreign assistance budget requested is approved by Congress.

HEALTH INITIATIVES

The overall request proposes \$4.2 billion for HIV/AIDS treatment, prevention and care activities in 15 African nations and an additional \$1.2 billion for AIDS programs worldwide. Overall, it would expand the number of people in Africa and the Caribbean receiving life-saving treatment for HIV/AIDS to 2 million by 2009, and contribute to AIDS research and multilateral partner organizations.

The request, if approved by Congress, would continue the President's Malaria Initiative for Africa and includes \$300 million to reduce malaria deaths by 50 percent in 15 targeted countries in Africa and to

fund ongoing malaria programs around the world.

The proposed budget calls for \$1.5 billion for child survival and health programs worldwide.

It includes \$2.4 billion for programs that support economic growth and poverty reduction, and \$2.3 billion for humanitarian assistance and for responding to humanitarian disasters.

Funding to fight narcotics in the Andean countries would be \$443 million.



DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

Programs that foster democratic transitions -- through independent media, pluralistic political parties, and voter education and election monitoring -- and that promote rule of law, good governance and human rights in nondemocratic nations would be funded at \$1.45 billion.

It proposes \$486 million for educational and cultural exchanges and \$359 million for public diplomacy programs to foster mutual understanding between the United States and other countries and to combat terrorism.

Under the proposal, the Peace Corps would receive \$334 million.

Multilateral development banks would get a boost to \$1.5 billion.

The proposed budget calls for \$1.3 billion for food aid.

Africa would receive a total of \$4.4 billion in aid funding. ♦

Bush's Budget Request Would Continue Increase in Foreign Aid

By Stephen Kaufman
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- U.S. foreign assistance could increase 12 percent in fiscal year 2008 from the enacted 2006 fiscal year levels as part of the \$2.9 trillion budget plan President Bush has proposed, said Ambassador Randall Tobias. Tobias is director of U.S. foreign assistance and administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

In remarks at the State Department February 5, Tobias said the Bush administration is seeking \$20.3 billion for the 2008 fiscal year.

The United States has been "a leader in championing human dignity and human potential," and its commitment to global development is evidenced by its level of development assistance "nearly tripling ... from approximately \$10 billion in 2000 to \$28.5 billion in 2005."

The 2008 budget request, which is subject to further action by the U.S. Congress, "continues that commitment, but it does so in what we believe is a much improved and much more strategic way," Tobias said.

The amount does not include funding for security and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, which will fall under the Bush administration's separate proposed emergency supplement funding for the global war on terrorism.

Tobias said 51 percent of the State Department and USAID's resources now are concentrated in rebuilding and developing activities. The fiscal year 2008 budget request includes a 20 percent increase in resources



for "low and lower middle income countries."

The request -- for the fiscal year that begins October 1 -- also seeks a 54 percent increase in U.S. assistance to Africa. "That will bring the total to a quadrupling of assistance to Africa during the course of this administration," he said.

During the same time period, the total aid for countries in the Western Hemisphere would double if the president's funding request is approved unchanged, he said.

The 2008 proposed budget "carefully tailors funds to development needs to each individual country through a concentration of resources on those areas where we believe our assistance can make the most difference," he said.

It is designed to address each coun-

try's current challenges "in an integrated way that will better ensure that we have sustainability of these programs going forward."

The president's proposal lists Israel, Egypt, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Indonesia and Kosovo among the top recipients of U.S. aid. Tobias said that under the proposed budget, Israel and Egypt's assistance levels are being reduced as stipulated under the 1978 Camp David agreement, and that many programs for India, which itself has become a donor country, would be cut under the proposed budget.

Brad Higgins, assistant secretary of state for resource management and chief financial officer for the State Department, said an additional \$10.14 billion is being requested for State Department foreign operations such as security, services and maintenance of its more than 260 diplomatic missions around the world.

Higgins said those services include educational and cultural exchange programs, as well as visa services for tourists or immigrants.

(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 Administration Proposes Cutting Farm Subsidies

By Kathryn McConnell
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The Bush administration is proposing to reduce its farm support programs over the next five years by tying commodity subsidies to farmers' incomes.

The new farm bill proposal the administration has sent to Congress would make U.S. farmers more competitive in the global agriculture marketplace while tightening spending, Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns said during a January 31 briefing for reporters.

"The time has come to move forward with a farm program that is market-oriented," Johanns said.

The agriculture secretary said that while the proposed farm bill would increase spending for some specialty crop, agricultural research and conservation programs, overall it would result in a \$10 billion savings from the amount spent on farm programs during the previous five years, excluding disaster aid funds.

Savings would be achieved, in part, by making farmers who earn more than a specified income ineligible for farm support payments.

Instead, farmers would receive some income protection during periods when crop yield is low by linking payments to revenue rather than price. In this way, farmers suffering from such calamities as drought or floods would get more payments than they currently do under those situations.

If changes are not made in a new farm bill, federal spending would increase by \$5 billion over the next five years, Johanns said.



[Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns gestures during a news conference at the Agriculture Department in Washington, Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2007.](#)
(AP Photo/Haraz N. Ghanbari)

The change would allow the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to continue to meet its World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments, USDA said.

In a speech in New York the same day, President Bush said the bill "provides a strong safety net while tightening spending and cutting subsidies."

"These proposals recognize the dramatic changes in agriculture since 2002 [when the current farm bill went into effect] and present policy ideas that are reform-minded and fiscally responsible and that provide strong support of agriculture in a global economy," Johanns said in a letter to the heads of the House of Representatives and Senate agriculture committees.

The current farm bill expires at the end of the 2007 crop year. It was developed when commodity prices were low, exports had decreased

for five years and U.S. farmers were dealing with significant debt problems, Johanns said.

Now, he said, prices are "strong" for most commodity crops and exports have increased -- to a record \$68.7 billion in 2006 -- and are expected to reach \$77 billion in 2007.

Reaction to the proposals was mixed, according to news reports.

Maize growers, who are experiencing high prices because of increased demand for their product for ethanol production, support the proposed change, but soy, wheat, rice and cotton farmers say it would mostly benefit the maize growers.

Oxfam America, an international relief and development organization, said the proposal is an "encouraging step toward meaningful farm program reform."

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United States Files Trade Complaint Against China's Subsidies

By Jaroslaw Anders and Kathryn McConnell
USINFO Staff Writers

Washington – The United States has filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO) about China's use of what U.S. officials say are illegal subsidies.

The subsidies give "unfair competitive advantage" to Chinese exports and deny U.S. makers of products ranging

from steel and wood to information technology the opportunity to compete fairly in China's market, U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab said in a February 2 briefing with reporters.

By encouraging Chinese exports and discouraging imports, China's export subsidies "are so trade-distorting that WTO rules prohibit them outright," Schwab said.

China applies a series of measures that, by allowing for refunds, reductions or exemptions from taxes and other payments appear designed to subsidize exports of manufactured goods or support the purchase of domestic over imported equipment and certain other products, according to a press release from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR).

The measures appear to be contrary to WTO rules that explicitly prohibit export and import substitution subsidies, USTR said.

China had committed to eliminate prohibited subsidies by the time it joined the WTO in 2001.

The United States repeatedly has raised concerns with China's officials about subsidies but no action has been taken to withdraw the subsidies, the agency said.



USTR Susan Schwab

"China's use of market-distorting subsidies creates an uneven playing field," Schwab said. She added that the subsidies are inconsistent with stated Chinese policies "seeking to rebalance China's economy with greater

emphasis on domestic consumption-led growth rather than export-led growth, and to promote the efficiency of China's domestic manufacturers."

In a written statement presented February 2 to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Thomas J. Christensen, deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, said correcting the substantial imbalances is among of the Bush administration's top priorities in U.S.-China economic relations.

"We will continue to seek cooperative and pragmatic resolutions to our concerns through bilateral dialogue with China, but will not hesitate to use WTO dispute settlement when dialogue fails," Christensen said in his testimony.

The United States previously has brought only two disputes to the WTO against China; a third was settled on the eve of a planned WTO filing.

Christensen said in his statement that the WTO dispute settlement process is not a sign of hostility because the United States also files WTO complaints against its closest allies and trading partners.

He noted that the value of U.S. exports to China as of November 2006 was \$50 billion – almost triple of what it was in 2001 when China joined the WTO. China's participation in the global economy helped raise tens of millions of its citizens out of poverty, educated a generation of Chinese entrepreneurs, opened

China's economy to quality U.S. products and services, and also contributed to keeping inflation low in the United States, he said.

This is an example, said Christensen, that "what is good for the United States is also good for China."



Thomas J. Christensen, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs

The full text ([http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Press_Releases/2007/January/](http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Press_Releases/2007/January/United_States_Files_WTO_Case_Against_China_Over_Prohibited_Subsidies.html)

[United_States_Files_WTO_Case_Against_China_Over_Prohibited_Subsidies.html](http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Press_Releases/2007/January/United_States_Files_WTO_Case_Against_China_Over_Prohibited_Subsidies.html)) of the press release on the WTO filing against China is available on the USTR Web site.

The full text (<http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2007/79866.htm>) of Christensen's prepared remarks is available on the State Department's Web site. ♦

Young Civic Leaders To Learn About Foundations of Democracy

Washington – Twenty-two young men and women from the Middle East and North Africa are embarking on a four-month learning experience as Leaders for Democracy Fellows. The program is the first of its kind to be sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative.

Participants, who range in age from early 20s to late 30s, will attend a monthlong academic program at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University before serving internships in organizations related to their areas of interest.

"It is a unique program," State Department official Owen Kirby told participants and guests at the January 31 reception at the Jordanian Embassy. "It is the type of program that ... bridges societies, cultures, in countries in the Middle East region and the United States," he said. Although the State Department runs visitor and exchange programs, this one is new. "We hope that it grows in years to come," he said.

The fellows, who were selected from more than 250 competitors, are leaders committed to building and contributing to their societies. They come from Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, the Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.

Among the participants are lawyers, doctors, journalists, educators, information technology specialists and human rights advocates, some of whom specialize in women's issues or civil and political rights advocacy.

The fellows met with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Assistant Secretary of State David Welch and other officials at the State Department, Congress, the Supreme Court and the White House.

At the Maxwell School, fellows will attend classes, lectures and discussions on the foundations of democracy. They will learn about leading and managing a democratic state, duties and rights of citizenship, private civic and social action and private enterprise. As interns, they will work in organizations in the state of New York and the city of Washington that correspond with their professional areas.

"The Maxwell School has endeavored in the past few years to create new relationships and programs in the Middle East, and we are honored that the State Department has chosen us from among dozens of other educational institutions to launch this important effort," Maxwell School Dean Mitchel Wallerstein said. Founded in 1924, the Maxwell School is known for its graduate program in public administration and international relations.

"We hope that not only participants of this program learn from the United States but also those who come in contact with them here ... who have the opportunity to meet and work with these outstanding young leaders, that they, too, also learn something about the region," Kirby said. He said the goal is also for Americans "to appreciate what the region can also offer us in the 21st century as a partner for the United States and as a contributing partner in the world."

For more information on U.S. policies, see Middle East Partnership Initiative (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/me_partnership_initiative.html).

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

Human Toll from Avian Influenza Continues in Nigeria, Egypt

By Cheryl Pellerin
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – The first human death from avian influenza in Africa has been reported in Nigeria, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), and the highly pathogenic Asian strain of bird flu has been found for the first time in the United Kingdom. The H5N1 virus was found in turkeys found dead on a farm in Suffolk, United Kingdom.

"NAMRU-3 collaborates very closely with the Egyptian government and, as a WHO reference laboratory, conducts testing at the request of the Egyptian Ministry of Health to identify or confirm suspected [avian influenza] cases," said Navy Lieutenant Andrew Stegall, NAMRU-3 administration director, in e-mail correspondence.

The 17-year-old female from Fayy-oum governorate developed symptoms January 25 and initially was treated for seasonal influenza. She was hospitalized February 1 with fever and breathing difficulties, and died the next day.

Initial investigations into the source of exposure indicate the presence of sick and dead poultry at her home in the days before she became ill. Of 20 cases confirmed to date in Egypt, 12 have been fatal.

FIRST U.K. OUTBREAK

In the United Kingdom, the Veterinary Laboratories Agency confirmed February 3 that the H5N1 virus is similar to a January outbreak on a farm in Hungary, where thousands of geese were killed.

A February 3 report filed by Debby Reynolds, chief veterinary officer with the U.K. Department for Envi-



Traders at Onipanu poultry market in Lagos. World Health Organisation experts are due in Nigeria this week following confirmation of the first human victim of H5N1 bird flu virus in the country. (AFP/File/Pius Utomi Ekpei)

ronment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in Paris, showed that 2,500 turkeys had died of the viral infection and 4,500 had been destroyed. The outbreak began January 27.

Poultry are being isolated from wild birds in the area, according to a February 6 DEFRA statement, and all bird gatherings – including shows, markets, fairs and pigeon races – have been banned throughout England, Scotland and Wales until further notice. Investigation continues into the source of the outbreak.

The U.K. Health Protection Agency advised that the current level of risk to people from H5N1 is "extremely low."

FIRST HUMAN DEATH IN AFRICA

The Nigerian government announced February 3 the presence of the H5N1 avian influenza virus in a 22-year-old female from Lagos who

died January 16. The victim's mother died January 4 with similar symptoms but no tests could be done because no blood samples were taken.

The Nigerian fatality brings the total number of human cases around the world since 2003 to 272, with 166 deaths.

The London-based WHO Collaborating Center for Reference and Research on Influenza confirmed the initial positive test findings of a laboratory in Nigeria. Investigations are under way to identify the source of the Nigerian woman's infection.

H5N1 virus has been identified in poultry outbreaks in Nigeria and, as in other affected countries, according to WHO, sporadic cases of human infection with avian influenza are not unexpected.

WHO says it is working with the Nigerian government to carry out

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Bush Administration Proposes Cutting Farm Subsidies . . .

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It said that the current subsidy programs encourage overproduction, with the surplus "dumped on the international market."

The Bush proposal would provide \$1.6 billion for ethanol and other renewable energy research, development and production.

It would expand involvement in world trade standard-setting bodies such as the international food safety convention Codex Alimentarius and the World Animal Health Organization.

It also would expand trade capacity, food safety and agricultural extension programs; provide \$1 billion for research targeting fruits and vegeta-

bles; and provide help for "disadvantaged farmers," particularly new and women farmers.

The administration's farm proposal ([http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1UH?](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1UH?contentid=media_kit.xml) contentid=media_kit.xml) and a transcript of Johanns' briefing ([http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome?](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome?contentid=2007/01/0021.xml) contentid=2007/01/0021.xml) are available on the USDA 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>) ♦

Human Toll from Avian Influenza Continues in Nigeria, Egypt . . .

(Continued from page 17)

intensive surveillance; reports of other suspected cases may occur as people with influenza-like symptoms seek medical advice.

ACCELERATED VACCINES

In the meantime, WHO and OIE are working with partners to find ways to improve and promote the development and production of pandemic vaccines. (See related story (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Oct/19-133344.html>).)

One such activity, WHO announced February 1, is to help make pandemic vaccine viruses, which are required to produce pandemic flu vaccines, available to vaccine producers earlier than in the past.

After analyzing biosafety risks, WHO and OIE agreed that if the pandemic preparedness alert phase reaches level 4 (evidence of increased human-to-human transmission) or above, pandemic flu vaccine viruses that WHO Collaborating Centers have developed can be made available to vaccine manufacturers before all safety tests are complete, including tests in chickens and ferrets.

WHO uses six phases of pandemic alert to inform the world about the seriousness of a threat and the need for progressively more intense preparedness activities. The WHO director-general designates the phases.

Each phase recommends activities to be undertaken by WHO, the international community, governments and industry. The world is

now in phase three – a new flu virus subtype is causing disease in people but is not yet spreading efficiently and sustainably among them. Phase six reflects efficient and sustained person-to-person transmission.

The accelerated procedure could reduce the time needed to develop pandemic vaccines by about 14 days.

Member states wishing to receive such vaccine viruses should make advance arrangements with customs authorities, courier companies, national regulatory agencies and other authorities, WHO advises. ♦