



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

Ambassador Huddleston Addresses Ethiopian Public Health Association

On Wednesday, October 26, the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, Ambassador Vicki Huddleston, spoke at the opening session of the annual meeting of the Ethiopian Public Health Association (EPHA). She described how the United States is working in partnership to improve health care in Ethiopia, through the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and



Ambassador Vicki Huddleston (left) on the dais at EPHA's annual meeting, with Minister of Health Dr. Tewodros Adhanom.

through such initiatives as the President's Emer-

gency Plan for AIDS Relief. She saluted the dedication and hard work of Ethiopia's health care providers, noting gains made in recent years in areas such as immunization and public hygiene and adding that, while U.S. assistance plays an important role, "These are not my accomplishments; these are *your* accomplishments." ♦

Trade Workshop Highlights Business Linkages

African Growth and Opportunity Act Promotes Exports

Addis Ababa (U.S. Embassy) – The U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is opening doors across Africa to increased trade with the United States. In order to help eligible countries to maximize AGOA benefits, The United States is sponsoring the East and Central Africa Regional AGOA Sectoral Workshop

in Addis Ababa on October 25 and 26, 2005.

The U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia will host the workshop in collaboration with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the East and Central Africa Global Competitiveness Hub based in Nairobi, and the Office of the U.S. Trade

Representative.

"It is exciting that Addis has the chance to host this important event," said U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Ambassador Vicki Huddleston, "and to showcase how Ethiopia, along with so many other countries in Africa, is benefiting from

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AGOA."

The program is designed to help producers in AGOA-eligible sectors learn how to break into the U.S. market. It will bring together producers of hand-loomed and hand-woven textiles, interior decorating and handi-craft items, and leather goods from East and Central Africa with buyers and experts from the U.S., creating an opportunity to offer insights into exporting under AGOA, to share the experiences of other African exporters, to enhance one-to-one buyer/seller dialogue, and to facilitate networking. Fifty-six producers from the 12 AGOA-eligible countries in the region will participate in the workshop.

The participating nations are: Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tanzania, and Uganda.

AGOA is the cornerstone of President Bush's trade and investment policy for sub-Saharan Africa. AGOA's objectives include promoting free markets, expanding U.S.-African trade and investment, stimulating economic growth, and facilitating regional and sub-Saharan Africa's integration into the global economy. The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative recently released an AGOA Competitiveness Report (available at www.agoa.gov) that describes some of the export sectors with the greatest potential in AGOA-eligible countries and offers suggestions



Ambassador Vicki Huddleston and State Minister for Trade and Industry Ato Tadesse Haile inspect one of the Ethiopian booths on display at the AGOA Regional Workshop.

on addressing trade barriers that are preventing the full development of these sectors.

Speaking recently in Washington, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Africa Florizelle Liser observed that, "as a direct result of

AGOA, many African businesses that had never previously considered the U.S. market are now attending trade shows in the United States -- and getting orders. Everything from Congolese honey wine to Senegalese seafood to Rwandan baskets is finding its way to eager customers in markets all across the United States."

AGOA has seen many success stories from East and Central Africa in 2005. For example:

- In August, Ethiopian companies that participated in the Apparel Sourcing Association Pavilion (ASAP) global sourcing trade show in Las Vegas, Nevada, negotiated orders that may reach \$10 million.
- A Rwandan company is part of holiday-season window displays at the prestigious Macy's Department Store in



AGOA workshop participants.

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United States Aids Earthquake and Volcano Victims in Afar Region

Addis Ababa (U.S. Embassy) – On October 13, Ambassador Vicki Huddleston, U.S. Chargé d’Affaires, issued a disaster declaration following damage caused by recent earthquakes and volcanic activity in the Afar Region. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), through its Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, responded by providing \$50,000 (over 430,000 birr) to support immediate emergency health services and nutritional support for the affected population. The funds will be administered by the U.S. Embassy in partnership with UNICEF.

“As chief of the U.S. mission in Addis Ababa, I am glad we have the ability to respond quickly and

effectively when disaster strikes,” said Ambassador Huddleston. “Funding made available as a result of this disaster declaration will help ensure that, with UNICEF’s help, urgent assistance gets directly from the American people to those who need it most.”

Mount Arteala, a long-dormant volcano in the Afar Region’s Teru Woreda, erupted on September 26, triggered by an earthquake with a magnitude of 5.5. A subsequent tremor in early October led to further volcanic activity, damaging roads and covering large areas of pasture with lava and volcanic ash. Ethiopia’s Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission reported that the eruption displaced

thousands of people from Dadaho and Boyana kebeles in Teru Woreda.

Although there were no human casualties, an estimated 1,000 livestock, including sheep, goats, and camels were killed, with extensive damage to roads and water points. The exact number of people affected remains unconfirmed, but officials estimate that 6,500 have been displaced and up to 50,000 people may need to evacuate the area due to the continuing volcanic activity. ♦

Trade Workshop Highlights Business Linkages. . .

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New York, and its products are currently available online through Macy’s as a result of attending the SOURCES Trade Fair in New York in May.

- A Kenyan knitted goods company continues to grow as its sales to the United States expand.

On July 18, 2005, at the AGOA Forum in Dakar, Senegal, President Bush announced the African Global Competitiveness Initiative, with a five-year funding target of \$200 million. This new initiative greatly expands the trade-capacity build-

ing efforts under way through the USAID’s Regional Trade Hubs, which are located in Accra, Ghana; Gaborone, Botswana; and Nairobi, Kenya. A fourth Hub will soon be established in Dakar.

As Lloyd O. Pierson, USAID’s Assistant Administrator for Africa, said at the Dakar Forum: “We are not talking just exports to the United States, although that is important. We are also talking about what we can do to do a better job of economic development within the continent – on a country basis, on a regional basis, and on a continent-wide basis.”

The East and Central Africa Regional AGOA Sectoral Workshop will be the first of a series of regional workshops across the African continent that will facilitate improvement in design, production, and marketing as well as promote increased trade and investment under AGOA.

For more information, contact The ECA Trade Hub in Nairobi at 254-20-2733250, visit www.ecatradehub.com/addis2005, or e-mail addis2005@ecatradehub.com.

Lawmakers Seek To Broaden African Growth and Opportunity Act

By Charles W. Corey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – Even though the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has been successful in spurring economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa by expanding exports to the U.S. market -- much remains to be done to broaden the historic legislation, especially in the area of small businesses, lawmakers say.

Republican Congressman Chris Smith, the chairman of the House International Relations Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations and Donald Payne, the subcommittee's ranking Democrat, each made that point -- along with Republican Congressman Ed Royce, the subcommittee's vice chairman -- at an October 20 hearing assessing the effectiveness of the AGOA legislation.

"Since being signed into law in May 2000," Smith told the subcommittee, "the African Growth and Opportunity Act, or AGOA, has increased U.S.-Africa trade to more than \$35 billion last year and created excitement on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean among businesspeople seeking to increase their income through trade."

Smith praised AGOA as perhaps the most significant United States initiative on Africa in history, but he lamented that about 80 percent of trade under AGOA remains in extractive industries, such as oil, and does not involve small-sized and medium-sized businesses to the extent originally intended by AGOA's authors.

"Despite the signing by President Bush of the AGOA Acceleration Act last year [July 2004] and the spending of \$181 million in 2004 on trade capacity building programs," he said, "small and medium-sized businesses in Africa and America have not been able to take advantage of AGOA's benefits as hoped.



Congressman Chris Smith

"Even after much discussion of this issue, there remain too many African and American businesspeople unable to successfully build the business ties necessary for U.S.-Africa trade to be more broadly meaningful for African economies," he said.

For that reason, he added, only a relatively small number of the nearly 6,500 duty-free items under AGOA are being traded by African and American small-sized and medium-sized businesses, including

hundreds of agricultural products that African farmers could be selling to the United States duty-free.

Smith acknowledged "AGOA has definitely produced some positive results due to the diligent support of the administration and many members of Congress Nevertheless," he said, "many of the goals they set have not been met, and after five years, it is time to make some course corrections so that AGOA fully lives up to its promise."

Payne said AGOA "must be expanded ... to maximize economic activities among a variety of sectors and to ensure a real and measurable impact on the economy and well-being of sub-Saharan Africa."

Quoting figures from the U.S. Commerce Department, Payne said trade between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa is "highly concentrated" with a small number of African countries accounting for an overwhelming share of both imports and exports.

For that reason, he said, "We need to broaden" the group of countries that benefit from AGOA. "Nigeria, South Africa, Angola and Gabon together claim 81.4 percent of U.S. imports from Africa in 2004," mostly in the energy sector, he added.

"We have heard from various African leaders and they are ready for a new and more inclusive AGOA," he declared.

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Lawmakers Seek To Broaden African Growth and Opportunity Act . . .

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Payne called on everyone to look for ways for AGOA to "deepen its coverage" of Africa's agricultural sector, which is where about 80 percent of all sub-Saharan Africans earn their livelihoods. "Increasing investment and incentives to African agriculture through AGOA would be the surest way of fighting poverty and hunger, especially among the poorest and neediest people on the continent," he said.

Payne cited farm subsidies paid by developed nations as the biggest obstacle to Africa's enhanced agricultural trade. "The U.S., EU [European Union] and Japan combined spend more than \$360 billion a year on subsidies to farmers or about 1 billion dollars a day," he said, and for that reason, "we must end these farm subsidies."

Subcommittee Vice Chairman Royce, a co-author of AGOA, called the act "a proven success" and "one of the most successful Africa policy initiatives ... ever."

Since AGOA's passage five years ago, Royce said he has witnessed a host of African business successes firsthand on his many visits to the continent.

"Over the years, I have visited manufacturing sites where AGOA is working, and seen job creation firsthand. And, as anyone who knows Africa is aware; one formal sector job often supports an ex-

tended family. Formal sector jobs also support many informal sector jobs. In sum, AGOA has benefited millions of Africans. Without it, there would be far fewer jobs in several very poor African countries, period. They would be in China and elsewhere, especially the apparel jobs," Royce said.

By promoting economic and political reforms -- reforms that are happening in several African countries -- AGOA also aids U.S. businesses, he said.

U.S. exports to sub-Saharan Africa increased 25 percent from 2003 to 2004, and include agricultural goods, machinery and transportation equipment. "More trade means higher economic growth for Africa, which leads to better infrastructure, and health and education services," he added.

Additionally, he said, "AGOA has given many Africans a psychological boost. It has shown that Africa, traditionally only a raw materials exporter, can play in the highly competitive global apparel industry and in some light manufacturing sectors. This is no small feat given intense global competition, especially from China."

Royce said that AGOA has spurred the U.S.-Africa trade agenda, leading to a new trade dialogue, including annual forums, with a goal to better integrate Africa into the world economy.

"Encouraged by AGOA, many African countries are now active players in global trade negotiations. Some have not appreciated Africa's new assertiveness, as our cotton subsidies have been rightly challenged. Many of us believe that Africa's empowerment on trade has been a very positive development, largely spurred by AGOA," he said.

Looking to the future, Royce said, "Of course, AGOA can be strengthened."

AGOA, enacted May 18, 2000, as Title I of The Trade and Development Act of 2000, offers tangible incentives for African countries to continue their efforts to open their economies and build free markets. The original act has been amended twice.

For additional information, see African Growth and Opportunity Act (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/trade_economic_development/agoa.html).

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

African Growth and Opportunity Act Enhancing Trade



Five years after its historic passage

into law by the United States Congress, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is having a "tremendously positive impact" on U.S.-Africa trade, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative Florizelle B. Liser told Congress October 20.

In testimony before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations of the House Committee on International Relations, Liser said AGOA's major policy objectives have been achieved over the past five years.

"AGOA has ignited an expansion of U.S.-African trade. Trade capacity-building assistance to support regional integration and development has grown. We are currently negotiating the first-ever free-trade area agreement with sub-Saharan African countries, and, by offering substantial trade benefits to those countries undertaking sometimes difficult economic and political reforms, AGOA has provided a powerful incentive and reinforcement for African efforts to improve governance, open markets, and reduce poverty," Liser told the lawmakers.

"AGOA," she said, "has also provided a platform -- through the annual AGOA Forum -- for a high-level dialogue on ways to improve U.S.-African trade and economic cooperation."

U.S. trade with sub-Saharan Africa, she further explained, continues to grow and AGOA has been a

"measurable success" in achieving increased trade between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa.

"U.S. imports from sub-Saharan Africa increased by over 50 percent from 2000-2004," she told the lawmakers, who called her to Capitol Hill for an assessment of the legislation's impact on U.S.-Africa trade trends.

Although much of the recent trade increase was related to oil, she said, other imports, including value-added products, such as apparel, automobiles and processed agricultural goods, more than doubled from 2001-2004.

"Our imports of African-made apparel have more than doubled since AGOA came into effect -- increasing from \$748 million in 2000 to over \$1.7 billion in 2004," she said. "Last year, 15 AGOA-eligible countries exported apparel to the United States; prior to AGOA only a few countries sent apparel of any significant quantity to the U.S. market."

AGOA SUCCESS STORIES

Liser said there are many AGOA success stories: Lesotho has become the leading sub-Saharan African exporter of apparel to the United States; Kenyan exports under AGOA now include fresh-cut roses, nuts and essential oils, as well as apparel; and many African businesses that previously never had considered the U.S. market are attending trade shows and receiving orders -- everything from Congolese honey wine to Senegalese seafood to Rwandan baskets.

"This increased trade has translated into thousands of new jobs in some of the poorest countries in Africa and hundreds of millions of dollars of new investment in the region," she said.

"Admittedly," she acknowledged, "AGOA's impact has not been shared equally by all eligible sub-Saharan African countries. While more countries are taking advantage of AGOA today than in 2001, much of the AGOA-related trade gains have been in a dozen or so countries and some eligible countries have yet to export any products under AGOA."

Concluding her testimony, Liser said African countries have an "important stake" in the successful outcome of the current round of world trade negotiations. "A new global trade accord could open up new markets for African goods and -- if African countries use the opportunity to continue opening their own markets -- could spark new investment flows into the region," she said.

AGOA, enacted May 18, 2000, as Title I of The Trade and Development Act of 2000, offers tangible incentives for African countries to continue their efforts to open their economies and build free markets. The original act has been amended twice.

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Sudan Focus of New Caucus in U.S. House of Representatives

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- A measure of the growing importance of Africa to American policymakers is the newly established House of Representatives Caucus on Sudan. The body of like-minded lawmakers joins more than 180 other caucuses in Congress focusing on timely issues such as law enforcement, medical technology, the Internet, hunger and foreign affairs.

Representative Frank Wolf (Republican of Virginia), who helped establish the Sudan Caucus along with Representatives Donald Payne (Democrat of New Jersey), Michael Capuano (Democrat of Massachusetts) and Tom Tancredo (Republican of Colorado), spoke to the Washington File October 19, the day of the bipartisan group's first meeting.

The mission of the caucus, Wolf said during a phone interview, is "to serve as a forum for members to discuss and advance U.S. policy toward Sudan."

"Sudan needs a high level of attention," the congressman explained, "especially now after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement [CPA]," which ended 20 years of fighting between the North and the South, and because of "continuing violence in Darfur." (Wolf accompanied former Secretary of State Colin Powell to the signing of the

CPA in Sudan January 9.) (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2005/Jan/10-699244.html>.)

"It's important that we don't lose focus on what's taking place in the CPA arrangement, to make sure it lasts. ... That means supporting the U.N. peacekeeping force deployed in southern Sudan and strengthening the AU [African Union] force in Darfur," Wolf added.



As for efforts in Sudan by the Bush administration, Wolf said: "Personally, I think the president has done a pretty incredible job on Sudan itself. From what I know of the work the president and Secretary Powell did on the CPA, I was ready to nominate both of them [for a Nobel Peace Prize]."

In addition to President Bush's attention to Sudan, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in July vis-

ited Khartoum and the Abu Shouk Camp in Al Fashar, Sudan, where she demanded that the Sudanese government reduce violence against women in refugee camps. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2005/Jul/22-638599.html>.)

Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick has made several trips to Sudan as well. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2005/Jul/12-591273.html>.)

Since 2003, the U.S. government has committed \$1.9 billion in humanitarian and development aid to Sudan. In 2005, more than \$500 million in humanitarian aid was allotted to Darfur and refugee camps in neighboring Chad, with a further \$204 million in food and disaster assistance requested for the next year.

As for Darfur, whose refugee camps he has visited several times, Wolf said: "It's about as bad as life can possibly be. A lot of the violence has stopped because many villages have been burned," with refugees spilling into camps in Darfur and neighboring Chad.

At a reception following the first caucus meeting, Tancredo became emotional, saying: "I make you a promise: All of our days are filled with hundreds of issues ... but this issue of Sudan will not be pushed aside."

A major role for the caucus, Tan-

(Continued on page 21)

Byliner: U.S. Soldiers Renovate Children's School in Djibouti

This article originally appeared in the U.S. Central Command/Coalition Newsletter September 26. There are no publication restrictions.

(begin byliner)

CJTF-HOA dedicates Mouloud school renovations

By Senior Airman Jason Piatek

MOILED, Djibouti - Members of the Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) joined the Mouloud community in Djibouti, Africa, and area officials to celebrate the dedication of the Mouloud Primary School Sept. 26.

The project, which was coordinated and funded by the Horn of Africa Task Force, included the renovation of three classrooms, the cafeteria and the kitchen, and the replacement of the school's roof.

"The windows and walls were broken, pipes weren't working and the electricity wasn't working," said Hawa Pileh, whose six children have all attended Mouloud Primary School.

"The children couldn't be inside the classrooms in the summer because of the heat. Now they have fans, electricity, and the damage that was fixed guards them from

injuries." The school, which consists of more than 250 students, was built in 1988 and this is the first renovation project it has received. The total cost of the project was about \$50,500.

"I can't express to you enough what these changes mean to us," said Muhammad Sougeh, the Mouloud Primary School director. "We

strong sense of pride when the parents and other community members see the changes being made, Mrs. Pileh said.

"This will help us provide for the future of this community. A community without education is like living in a house without lights," she said. "I hope my children will be able to use their education to



Lance Cpl. Daniel Medina, radio operator, dances in a classroom with some school children who are practicing for the Mouloud Primary School dedication, Sept. 26, 2005.

are very happy. These people will never forget what (CJTF-HOA) has given us."

"We do this for one reason - schools represent the future of a nation and the wish of every parent that their children will have a better life than they did," said Col Dwight Trafton, Chief of Staff, CJTF-HOA.

Since the students are all from the Mouloud community, there is a

help their community and their country."

(end byliner)

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

Compassion, Charity Hallmarks of USAID Iftar Dinner

By Todd Bullock
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Hosting the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) third annual iftar dinner October 20, USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios spoke of the affirmation of faith and compassion through Islam as well as the U.S. commitment to development throughout the world.

Natsios recognized the achievements of Muslim charitable organizations and reaffirmed the U.S. partnership with many of these organizations in helping improve the lives of those in need throughout the world.

"We are working actively in the Muslim world. Half of our \$17 billion budget is spent in Muslim countries from Morocco to Indonesia and in Muslim countries in Africa and Central Asia," Natsios said. His audience consisted of U.S. Muslim civic leaders as well as members of the diplomatic corps in the meal that breaks the daytime fast during the month of Ramadan.

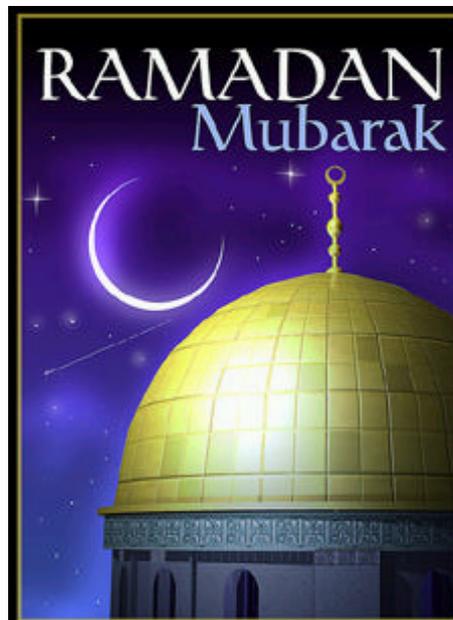
Offering the prayer to break the fast before the dinner, Imam Hisham Hussainy of the Karbala Institute in Dearborn, Michigan, said, "Fasting may be practiced around the world at different times for different reasons but God wanted us all to feel the need and hunger of those who suffer."

"In this time of compassion, we need to pray more and help one another. I am proud to be here at the time of the holy month of Ramadan with those who hold these values," Hussainy said.

"I think a person of faith cannot

help but be moved when people of faith reaffirm their faith's connection to God and their commitment to fellow human beings," Natsios added.

He cited USAID's recent efforts to develop a free and responsible media in Afghanistan through the establishment of 29 locally owned and operated radio stations.



Natsios applauded the work of U.S. Sunni and Shi'a leaders who have traveled abroad and engaged audiences on Muslims' active participation in U.S. civil society.

The administrator also recognized the daily work and compassionate acts of USAID's non-U.S. staff around the world, which accounts for 4,966 employees out of USAID'S total staff of 7,193.

Several Muslim leaders also spoke of their successful partnerships with other faith-based organizations on humanitarian projects as well as gains in improving an understanding of Islam in the

United States and abroad.

Mohamed Elibiary, president of the Texas-based Freedom and Justice Foundation, a nongovernmental organization dedicated to protecting Muslims' civil rights and improving Muslim participation in civil society, said his organization recently worked with Christian organizations to engage in the first public dialogue on mutual understanding between Muslims and Christians in Texas.

Asma Gull Hasan, a U.S. attorney and author of two books on Muslim life in the United States, spoke of her travels throughout the United States, Europe and Japan to inform audiences about U.S. Muslims.

"Some of the most important work is engaging youth audiences," Hasan said, "Many American youths are learning that there are more similarities between Islam and Christianity and Judaism than differences and this helps build greater understanding."

She said the iftar dinner made her reflect on the meaning of family and unity and noted the diversity of the group gathered to share in the compassionate tradition of Ramadan.

President Bush also hosted October 17 an iftar dinner at the White House. He spoke of the spirit and compassion of Islam and thanked the Muslim nations that have joined the coalition in the worldwide fight against extremism. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2005/Oct/17-682061.html>)).♦

Muslims, Jews, Christians Observe Holy Days Together

By Afzal Khan
Washington File Special Correspondent

Washington – The rare confluence of Muslim, Jewish and Christian holy holidays during October and November this year is encouraging interfaith gatherings across the United States.

The Muslim holy month of Ramadan that began on October 3-4 and ends November 3-4 has overlapped with the Jewish holy month of Tishri

that began October 3. Jews observe Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Such a confluence has not happened for more than 30 years. The dates of Ramadan, which follows the lunar calendar, shift each year because of disparities between the solar and lunar calendars.

Also, Eastern Orthodox Christians begin fasting on November 15 to observe the Advent, the 40 days leading to Christmas.

American Muslims and Jews are taking advantage of this coincidence of their holy months to arrange interfaith gatherings across the United States.

Muslim and Jewish students at Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota, got together to share a traditional evening meal and pray

when Ramadan began in some parts of the world on the evening of October 3, coinciding with Rosh Hashanah. They plan to continue such meetings.

At the University of Missouri in Columbia, the

American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) chapter in Tampa, Florida, and a woman rabbinical chaplain of a local hospital helped form Serving the One.

On October 15 in Cleveland, Ohio, the Ershad Institute of the Iranian Shi'ite community hosted an interfaith program all day at the Bedford Christian Church of the Disciples of Christ. After iftar, the meal to break fast after sunset, a panel discussion was held with a Christian priest, a Jewish rabbi and a Muslim imam.

In Springfield, Massachusetts, the local Islamic Society of Western Massachusetts plans to host a special interfaith iftar party on October 20.

Similar to CAIR for the Muslims, the Shalom Center, a Philadelphia-based network of American Jews, is promoting such community fast-breaking events nationally.

Founder of the Shalom Center, Rabbi Arthur Waskow, calls the confluence of the two holidays "God's October surprise" on his 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>) ♦

Jewish students' organization Boone Tikkun and the Muslim Students Organization shared a potluck dinner on October 6. It was the second day of Ramadan for Muslims and also Gedalya, a minor Jewish fast day that follows Rosh Hashanah. The point of the evening was to bring together Jews and Muslims in a social setting where they could learn more about their religions from one another.

On October 13, the day of Yom Kippur, the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg, hosted an evening vegetarian meal sponsored by Serving the One, an interfaith community group. The Council on



Ramadan prayer



Jewish Praying on Rosh Hashanah

USAID Announces New Office of Military Affairs

By Todd Bullock
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington - The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is building a partnership with the U.S. military to improve coordination in humanitarian relief efforts.

Speaking October 19 at a public hearing of the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid, Michael Hess, assistant administrator for USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, announced the formation of a new USAID office to coordinate humanitarian efforts, planning and doctrine with the U.S. Department of Defense and the State Department.

The advisory committee was established after World War II to serve as a link between the U.S. government and private volunteer organizations active in humanitarian assistance and development work overseas. It members are 24 private citizens with extensive international development experience.

"Since post-conflict reconstruction is a pillar of the U.S. national security strategy, it is imperative for USAID to have an operational link with the military on how to better coordinate strategic development goals," Hess said.

According to Hess, the Office of Military Affairs will place senior USAID development professionals in staff positions on the five geographic unified Combatant Commands -- Central Command, Southern Command, Northern Command, Pacific Command and European Command -- to assist military professionals in assessing development needs and priorities.

In addition to the staff positions with the Combatant Commands, Hess said USAID also plans to participate in joint exercises with the military to add development issues to military planning as well as to "maintain emergency response readiness" for future disasters and conflicts.

"The Office for Military Affairs will also serve as a contact point to increase working relationships between nongovernmental organizations and the U.S. military," he said.

"NGOs often have tremendous operational experience in working in various environments and their input into the development process will allow the United States to be more efficient in administering humanitarian assistance," Hess said.

Addressing the role of education in the development process, Hess said the military affairs office also would have a component to coordinate efforts between the De-

fense Department and USAID not only to enhance development, but to improve education for different populations.

"The educational component in development is critical to developing a sustainable capacity in regions," Hess said, "The Office of Military Affairs will be able to integrate best training and education practices among the military's civil affairs officers and USAID workers to increase capacity."

Finally, Hess cited recent successes in joint cooperation between USAID and the military through numerous humanitarian operations in Indonesia following the December 2004 earthquake and tsunami. However, he noted the experience demonstrated the need for "a strategic planning relationship between USAID and the military."

For additional information on the U.S. military's emergency response and relief efforts, see *Improving Lives: Military Humanitarian and Assistance Programs* (<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/1104/ijpe/ijpe1104.htm>).

(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, U.N.'s Annan Welcome Passage of Iraqi Constitution Draft

President Bush and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan have welcomed the announcement from the Iraqi electoral commission that voters have approved Iraq's draft constitution in a referendum October 15. (begin excerpt)

"With their courageous vote, the Iraqi people have once again proved their determination to build a democracy united against extremism and violence," Bush said in a speech in Washington October 25.

The secretary-general called the referendum an "historic event," which he hopes will mark a milestone on Iraq's path to democracy, according to a statement issued by the United Nations.

He said the referendum clears the way for Iraq to hold national elections for a permanent government December 15 and the United Nations will make every effort to help Iraq build a democratic and united country.

The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq released the preliminary results of the referendum on the draft constitution October 25. Election officials reported that more than 78 percent of the voters approved the document.

For additional information, see Iraq's Political Process (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq/political_process.html).

Following are an excerpt from Bush's speech and the text of a U.N. statement on the secretary-general's reaction to the referendum results:

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

October 25, 2005

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT TO THE JOINT ARMED FORCES OFFICERS' WIVES' LUNCHEON
Bolling Air Force Base
Washington, D.C.

[...]

At the same time, Iraqis are making inspiring progress toward building a democracy. Ten days ago, millions of Iraqis turned out to vote on a constitution that guarantees fundamental freedoms and lays the foundation for lasting democracy. And today the Iraqi elections commission certified the passage of the constitution. Many more Sunnis participated in this vote than in January's historic elections, and the level of violence was dramatically lower. With their courageous vote, the Iraqi people have once again proved their determination to build a democracy united against extremism and violence.

An 85-year-old Iraqi woman cast a ballot in favor of the constitution after her son carried her on his back to the polls. Here's what she said. She said, "I went out to vote for it because I want the future to be safe and peaceful for my sons



President George W. Bush speaks to the Joint Armed Forces Officers' Wives Luncheon Oct. 25, 2005

and my grandchildren."

[...]

(end excerpt)

(begin text)

[United Nations]
Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General [Kofi Annan]

Iraq Referendum Results

The Secretary-General is pleased that the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq released the preliminary results of the referendum on the draft constitution this morning. He commends the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq for having organized the referendum under very difficult circumstances.

(Continued on page 21)

State Department Issues Update on U.S. Aid to Earthquake Victims

U.S. efforts to assist those affected by the 7.6-magnitude earthquake that struck South Asia October 8 were summarized by the Department of State in a fact sheet issued October 20.

The fact sheet updates information initially released by the White House early on October 10. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/Archive/2005/Oct/10-92226.html>).

The earthquake, which hit a remote region in northern Pakistan near Islamabad, Pakistan, is estimated to have killed more than 30,000 people. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-eng-lish&y=2005&m=October&x=20051010142737TJkcolluB0.7701685&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html>).

For additional information on the earthquake and its aftermath, see U.S. Response to Earthquake in South Asia (http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/south_asia/earthquake.html).

Following is the State Department fact sheet:

(begin fact sheet)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

FACT SHEET

Office of the Spokesman
Washington, D.C.
October 20, 2005

State Department Update on U.S. Response to South Asia Earthquake

In testimony before the U.S. House Committee on International



Pakistani workers unload relief goods sent by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) at a military base in Rawalpindi October 10, 2005.

Relations today, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina B. Rocca said, "We are providing funds for rescue and relief to both Pakistan and India. We are providing urgently needed transportation and material support to the Government of Pakistan. We are mobilizing the private sector to provide additional leadership and support to address the many pressing needs faced by victims. In the days ahead, we will urge the international community to join us in support of the earthquake's victims and we will be vigorously engaged at next week's U.N. meetings in Geneva. There is much that the United States can contribute, but we cannot do it all ourselves."

The United States has made an initial pledge of \$50 million available for immediate aid to Pakistan. From this pledge USAID has now provided close to \$17 million to organizations rendering assistance on the ground. U.S. civilian and military equipment, commodities

and experts have poured into Pakistan and are being deployed, as requested by the Government of Pakistan, to relieve suffering and minimize further loss of life.

In addition, the United States remains the principal international provider of airlift capabilities to augment the capacity of the Government of Pakistan to assist earthquake victims. The United States will continue to supplement these capabilities. Nineteen helicopters, provided by the United States, are supporting relief operations of the Government of Pakistan, the United Nations and other relief organizations. U.S. helicopters have flown close to 500 missions, delivered over a million pounds of relief supplies and evacuated close to 4,000 people needing immediate medical attention. We expect to deploy 19 additional helicopters to Pakistan in the next few days.

(Continued on page 18)

War on Terrorism Involves Battle of Ideas, Arms, Hadley Says

By Merle D. Kellerhals Jr.
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- From the beginning, the War on Terror has been both a battle of arms and a battle of ideas for the United States, its allies and friends, says President Bush's national security advisor.

"In the short run, we must use our military forces and other instruments of national power to fight the terrorists, deny them safe haven, and cut off their sources of support," National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley said in a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations October 18 in New York.

However, he acknowledged that in the longer term "we must win the battle of ideas" between their "grim totalitarian vision" versus the free world's "positive vision of freedom and democracy."

At the core of this battle, he said, is the need to encourage Islamic moderates to dispute the distorted vision of Islam advanced by the terrorists.

"A struggle is under way for the soul of Islam -- an ideological struggle for the support and loyalty of the Muslim world. Winning this struggle will require a direct challenge to the extremist voices within Islam," Hadley said.

Some Muslim clerics and legal scholars in the United States and elsewhere already have begun condemning terrorism. And the overwhelming majority of the Muslim world has become increasingly outraged by the murders of innocent people in London, Madrid, Bali, Beslan, Istanbul and Morocco, weakening support for the global



Stephen Hadley
National Security Advisor

extremist movement, he said.

Hadley also said that the world has seen the terrorists' vision of governance played out in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime, which "imposed an artificial conformity that eliminated individual freedom, enslaved women, destroyed the nation's cultural history, and ruled by terror."

The antidote, he says, is democracy, justice and the freedom agenda.

"This agenda offers empowerment as an alternative to enslavement," he said.

Hadley likened the ideological struggle to the struggles of the 20th century against earlier totalitarian visions -- fascism, Nazism and communism in Europe.

"Those ideologies similarly relied on terror to advance their twisted visions and to control whole populations. They, too, found fertile

soil among people who were powerless, either as victims of corrupt dictatorships, or the multiple devastations of world wars and economic deprivation," he said.

Freedom and democracy proved to be a stronger force then and they will now, he said.

"When the captives of these false visions had the opportunity to choose freely, they chose freedom. And so it will be as we confront the ideology of the 21st century terrorists."

But Hadley cautioned that freedom, justice and democracy cannot be imposed from the outside, it has to be chosen.

"A people must find their own freedom -- and often they must fight for it. When they do, the result will reflect their own history, culture and national experience," he said.

The full text (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/10/20051018-6.html>) of Hadley's remarks before the Council on Foreign Relations is available on the White House Web site.

For additional information, see Response to Terrorism (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/terrorism.html).

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

U.S. Deeply Disappointed by Vote on UNESCO Diversity Convention

By Jeffrey Thomas
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States is deeply disappointed by the vote of an agency of the United Nations October 20 to approve a convention on cultural diversity that the United States believes has major flaws, according to Louise Oliver, U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

"We would have supported a convention that promoted true cultural diversity," said Oliver, speaking October 21 from Paris, in a digital videoconference with journalists in Washington.

The United States is the most open country in the world to cultural diversity, she said, and will continue to work to promote true cultural diversity despite its "deep regret at the loss of an opportunity" for the right kind of a convention, she said.

As passed, the convention contains ambiguities and contradictions that could be misused or misinterpreted by governments, she said, citing U.S. concerns about the convention's potential impact on trade, the free flow of information and human rights.

Oliver said there are other countries that now share U.S. concerns, and many diplomats thanked her personally for alerting them to the pitfalls of this convention, even though they felt they had to vote for it.

The United States also voted against the UNESCO program and budget submitted to the confer-



ence for approval on October 21 because it contains funds for implementing the flawed convention, she said.

CONVENTION THREATENS FREE FLOW OF IDEAS, U.S. SAYS

In an October 20 statement explaining the U.S. "no" vote, Oliver said that ambiguities in the document's text could be used "to undermine UNESCO's constitutional obligation" to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-eng-lish&y=2005&m=October&x=20051020170821GLnesnoM3.670901e-02&t=gi/gi-latest.html>).

Moreover, governments could take advantage of ambiguities in the text to legitimize actions denying human rights and fundamental freedoms. "Anyone who looks around the world today will understand that such concerns are not unfounded, and can entail the possibility of grave consequences in some societies," she said.

The convention's potential for damaging trade is another reason for U.S. opposition to its passage. Some government leaders, Oliver said, "have indicated a clear intent to use this convention to control --

not facilitate -- the flow of goods, services, and ideas."

Asked for an example during the videoconference, Oliver cited France's expansion of the list of "cultural expressions" from such things as art, music and language to include such agricultural products as wine.

The United States believes "it is critical that this organization and global leaders make clear that this convention will not become yet another tool for major world markets to shut out goods and services from developing and other markets," said Oliver, adding, "The goal of the United States is to ensure the free flow of diversity in all its forms -- cultural, informational, and trade."

UNITED STATES CRITICIZES FLAWED PROCESS

Oliver also described U.S. objections to the process by which the convention came to a vote at UNESCO's biannual general conference in Paris.

"The process disturbs us as much as the substance," she said, saying later that the United States expected only a preliminary text in 2005, not a finished, non-negotiable one.

Even though the idea of a convention to promote cultural diversity has been around for a long time, she said, the United States was given a completely new text as recently as April. This text vastly expanded the scope of what is considered a cultural expression and focused more on protecting cultural diversity than promoting it.

(Continued on page 16)

U.S. Deeply Disappointed by Vote on UNESCO . . .

(Continued from page 15)

After some negotiations in May, the United States was told June 4 that not a single word thereafter could be changed.

For the last four months, the United States has sought to negotiate ways of strengthening the convention but had been rebuffed. All 28 amendments proposed by the United States at the conference the week of October 17 to clarify ambiguities and contradictions in the text were rejected, she said. "This is not the way UNESCO is supposed to operate," she said.

She noted that the United States was able to join the consensus the week of October 18 in reaching agreements for a declaration on bioethics and a convention against doping in sports.

As passed by the conference, the

cultural diversity convention "could be used by states to justify policies that could be used or abused to control the cultural lives of their citizens," said Oliver in her explanation. "We believe -- in keeping with existing conventions -- that the world must affirm the right of all people to make these decisions for themselves."

In voting October 20 at UNESCO's Paris headquarters, the conference approved the convention by a vote of 148 in favor, two opposed (the United States and Israel), and four abstentions (Australia, Nicaragua, Honduras and Liberia).

The convention must be ratified by 30 countries to take effect.

The conference also mustered the necessary two-thirds vote to pass UNESCO's program and budget on October 21. The United

States' share of UNESCO's \$610 million budget is 22 percent, or \$134 million, Oliver said. The U.S. "no" vote on the budget does not in and of itself mean that the United States will not pay its allotted share.

For additional information, see a State Department fact sheet (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=October&x=20051012123119AKllennoccm0.8266413&t=eur/eur-latest.html>) that outlines U.S. concerns about the agreement.

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

Africa Seen as Next Likely Location for Bird Flu Outbreak . . .

(Continued from page 19)

tives to avert a flu pandemic that could take an estimated 8 million lives worldwide.

In September, the United States organized the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza. At its first meeting in Washington October 14, some 88 countries and eight international organizations identified three priority areas for collaboration. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Oct/08-60246.html>).

These included building stockpiles of drugs and supplies, speeding vaccine development and distribution and implementing rapid response and containment measures.

The United States is working to dispense a \$25 million assistance package to help other nations combat avian influenza.

It is expected that the U.S. Congress will be considering additional assistance for other nations in the

forthcoming round of budget discussions.

For more information on U.S. and international efforts to combat avian influenza, see Bird Flu (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>) ♦

United States Says No U.N. Body Should Control Internet

By Tim Receveur
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – The United States says that transferring control of the Internet to the United Nations would stifle innovation with excessive bureaucracy and may help repressive regimes curtail free expression online, according to the U.S. coordinator for international communications and information policy.

In a November 2 Internet chat, Ambassador David Gross, U.S. coordinator for international communications and information policy, will preview an upcoming summit on Internet governance and discuss his views on why the very nature of the Internet as an innovative and dynamic medium is at stake.

The United Nations-sponsored World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) will convene on November 16-18 in Tunis, Tunisia, to discuss the future of Internet governance and ways to bring the benefits of technology to the developing world.

The Internet has become "an extraordinary mechanism for freedom of expression. Each year, publications are available on the Internet; people are able to directly communicate with them, with each other, through the Internet," Gross said at a roundtable with journalists in Washington October 6.

The current system of Internet governance "is extraordinarily participatory," he said. "Not just by other governments, which all of whom already played an important role in this, but also by what's called civil society, by private en-

terprise, by a whole host of actors, by technical people, academics and the like," Goss said. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2005/Oct/06-182731.html>) and transcript (<http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/rm/2005/54794.htm>).

The U.S. government has maintained a consistent hands-off approach that has allowed the Internet to grow and develop without substantial restrictions.



Since 1998, a nonprofit organization named ICANN -- Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers -- has been responsible for managing and coordinating the Internet's domain names, according to ICANN.

ICANN's role has been to facilitate and smooth the explosive growth of the Internet. Its president directs an international staff, working from three continents, who ensure that ICANN meets its operational commitment to the Internet community.

FEARS BUREAUCRATIC CONTROL WOULD STIFLE INNOVATION

Gross expressed concern over some other countries' proposals for sharing or ceding private sector oversight of the Internet -- includ-

ing what ICANN now does -- to the United Nations.

A recent European Union proposal, for example, outlined a new framework for international cooperation that would see the creation of a new, multistakeholder "forum" to develop public policy, and international government involvement in allocation of Internet Provider (IP) addressing systems.

"As we read the EU proposal, there will be a group of bureaucrats from countries around the world that will be able to restrict the innovation that the technical people in Italy, for example, currently bring to the Internet and their ability to be able to continue to innovate," Gross said. "We would like to see people -- whether it's in Italy, Russia, United States, around the world -- be free to continue to innovate and not have to seek permission or make sure that they structure what they do in a way that meets some predetermined outcome set by a bunch of international government bureaucrats.

"What the EU seems to propose is a top-down bureaucratic structure that was the way of the last century and that seems to us to be counterproductive because it stifles innovation, it stifles the very thing that's made the Internet as successful as it is," he said.

He also noted that support for the EU proposal, which was made at a preparatory conference (PrepCom-3) for the Tunis summit in September, was expressed by Cuba, Iran and China, among others. "These are not, I submit, the types of people who necessarily

(Continued on page 18)

United States Says No U.N. Body Should . . .

(Continued from page 17)

see eye to eye with us in terms of the importance of the growth and the participatory nature of the Internet," Gross said.

PrepCom-3 failed to reach agreement on a number of contentious issues, and the United States is working with other governments, private enterprise and nongovernmental organizations to craft an agreement that will bridge diverse positions on how, by whom and to what degree the Internet should be governed or regulated.

"We see the way in which the Internet has worked so far, and we support its continuing evolution. What we don't want to see is an intergovernmental group coming in to stifle that," Gross said.

He noted that the preparatory meeting would resume for three days on the eve of the WSIS summit in Tunis. "Between now and then, we are already and we'll continue to be very actively engaged in bilateral discussions, not only with governments but with

other groups -- industry, civil society and the like. And, you know, we are very hopeful that when the world leaders gather in Tunis in November, that they will have a document to endorse that we can all be proud of," he said.

During the live Internet chat on November 2, Gross will be available to answer questions about the upcoming WSIS summit in Tunis and the U.S. position on various issues relating to Internet governance. The chat will be held at 11:00 a.m. EST (1600 GMT).

To ask a question or make a comment, please register at iipchat@state.gov (<mailto:iipchat@state.gov>). If you already have participated in one of our previous discussions, there is no need to register again. Just use the same user name and password. We neither require nor encourage the use of full names. You may identify yourself by the user name of your choice.

As always, your questions and comments are welcome in advance

of the program and at any time during it.

Additional information (<http://www.state.gov/e/eb/cip/wsis2005/>) on the World Summit on the Information Society is available on see the State Department, including the U.S. government's comments (<http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/2005/51063.htm>) on Internet governance in response to the report of the United Nations Working Group on Internet Governance.

A biography (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/46292.htm>) of Ambassador Gross is also available on the State Department Web site.

More information (<http://www.itu.int/wsis/>) is also available on the WSIS Web site.

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State Department Issues Update on U.S. Aid to Earthquake Victims . . .

(Continued from page 13)

Fifty-nine U.S. military and civilian airlifts to Pakistan have delivered hundreds of tons of medical supplies, tents, plastic sheeting, blankets, food, cots, and water containers and purification units.

We continue to urge the American people to support the relief effort. Because of the difficulties and complications created by sending goods directly to earthquake vic-

tims, we strongly urge private donors to contribute money to humanitarian organizations.

For additional details on the relief efforts and a list of participating humanitarian organizations, please visit http://www.defenselink.mil/home/features/2005/Pakistan/index_flash.html and www.usaid.gov (<http://www.usaid.gov/>).

Released on October 20, 2005

(end fact sheet)

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

Africa Seen as Next Likely Location for Bird Flu Outbreak

By Charlene Porter
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – A Thai man has died from avian influenza, according to confirmations from the Thai Ministry of Public Health and the World Health Organization (WHO) October 20.

Health authorities linked his infection with the H5N1 bird flu strain to contact with diseased poultry in a province where outbreaks were detected in domestic flocks in September and early October.

Officials said that Africa could become the next region stricken with the bird flu virus since wild birds are thought to be carrying the virus along migratory routes.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) said the reports from Thailand resulted in the destruction of tens of thousands of birds.

The 48-year-old Thai man succumbed to illness six days after the appearance of symptoms.

The victim's 7-year old son, who helped his father in the slaughter of birds, also is suffering from respiratory symptoms. Tests are under way to determine the cause of his infection.

The Thai death is the first in that Southeast Asian nation since October 2004. Since the Asian outbreaks began in December 2003, Thailand has confirmed 18 human cases of H5N1 infection, with 13 fatalities.

Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia are the only nations to have reported human disease

caused by H5N1, a highly pathogenic virus that has led to the death or destruction of more than 150 million birds in Southeast Asia.

In the four countries, WHO now puts the human case count at 118 with 61 deaths.

AFRICA AT RISK

Avian influenza outbreaks have moved north and west over the last several months. The first diseased birds were confirmed in Europe October 13.



Wild birds are thought to be carrying the virus along migratory routes. If that theory holds true, Africa could become the next region stricken with a virus that health officials warn could set off a global pandemic of human influenza.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) warns that East Africa could become the place where bird flu outbreaks begin to affect the human population widely.

The likelihood of the disease's migration to Africa increases, the FAO reported October 19, with the confirmation of bird cases in Ro-

mania and Turkey. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Oct/18-593270.html>.)

Health experts warn that the virus could change to become contagious among humans. That development could cause an influenza pandemic because people would be exposed widely to this flu strain for the first time.

East Africa is a very likely place for such a transformation of the virus to occur, according to FAO veterinary officer Joseph Domenech.

"The close proximity between people and animals and insufficient surveillance and disease-control capacities in eastern African countries create an ideal breeding ground for the virus," said Domenech in an October 19 FAO press release.

"The countries urgently need international assistance to build up basic surveillance and control systems," he added.

Even though the detection of H5N1 in domestic poultry in Romania and Turkey has set off a wave of concern in Europe in recent days, the FAO says the risk from wild birds to western and northern Europe now is low.

That could change in Europe's spring -- the next migrating season -- when flocks of infected birds could fly over the region.

U.S. ROLE

The United States is joining the international community in initia-

(Continued on page 16)

Scientists Discover How Mosquito Fights Malaria Parasite

International researchers from the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany have identified a gene in mosquitoes that helps the insects fight off infection by the Plasmodium parasite, which causes malaria in people.

According to a press release from the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Anopheles mosquitoes transmit the malaria parasite to nearly 550 million people worldwide each year, resulting in more than 2 million deaths.

The protective gene was identified in a study conducted by a team of investigators from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Malaria Research Institute, the University of Texas Medical Branch, the Imperial College of London and the European Molecular Biology Laboratory in Germany.

The malaria-causing Plasmodium parasite has a complex life cycle.

Mosquitoes are infected with the parasite when they draw blood from people who have malaria. As the parasite matures, it moves from the mosquito's digestive tract

to its salivary glands. Once in a mosquito's salivary glands, the parasite can be injected into another person when the mosquito feeds again.

In the study, the researchers determined that the SPRN6 gene, which normally is switched off in

was removed.

In Anopheles gambiae mosquitoes, removing the SPRN6 gene delayed the process of parasite lysis (disintegration), which is how the mosquito rids itself of the parasite.



"This study furthers our knowledge of the malaria-parasite lysis in mosquitoes. It may help provide better tools for controlling the disease in the future," said lead author Eappen Abraham, a research associate at the Johns Hopkins Malaria Research Institute.

Abraham and colleague Marcelo Jacobs-Lorena are developing a transgenic (genetically altered) mosquito in which the SPRN6 gene permanently is switched on to create a mosquito that would be immune to the Plasmodium parasite.

They believe such a mosquito could help disrupt the transmission of malaria to humans.

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

Anopheles stephensi and Anopheles gambiae mosquitoes, is switched on when they are infected with the malaria parasite.

To determine the function of SPRN6, the researchers deactivated the gene in the mosquitoes through a process called RNA interference.

They observed that the number of parasites that developed in Anopheles stephensi mosquitoes increased three-fold when the gene

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Bush, U.N.'s Annan Welcome Passage of Iraqi Constitution Draft . . .

(Continued from page 12)

The Iraqi people have made their decision and have approved the draft constitution. The Secretary-General commends the Iraqi people for this historic event, which he hopes will mark a milestone on Iraq's path to democracy. The high levels of voter turnout throughout the country and amongst all the main political constituencies are particularly encouraging. That so many voters turned out to vote despite the threats against them is a welcome sign of their desire to choose ballots rather than bullets to express their political views.

With the adoption of the constitution, Iraq can now move forward to the next step in its political transition process, the holding of national elections on 15 December. The Secretary-General calls on all Iraqis

to participate with the same commitment in the upcoming election campaign, which will determine the composition of Iraq's new parliament.

The Secretary-General hopes that the adoption of Iraq's constitution will encourage all Iraqis to reach out to one another in a spirit of national reconciliation through a fully inclusive political process to build a democratic and united Iraq. The United Nations will continue to make every effort to support the efforts of the Iraqi people and Government to that end.

New York, 25 October 2005

(end text)

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

Sudan Focus of New Caucus in U.S. House of Representatives. . .

(Continued from page 7)

credo added, will be to exert pressure to keep the CPA on track and end the violence in Darfur.

On October 4, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack issued a statement saying all "parties must immediately stop all violence in Darfur, abide by the cease-fire they signed in N'Djamena, Chad, and adhere to United Nations Security Council resolutions and the terms of the humanitarian and security protocols they signed earlier in Abuja, Nigeria." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Oct/05-862807.html>).)

Despite the recent spate of natural disasters that have struck America, causing billions of dollars' worth of damage, Wolf believes the American public will continue to support current levels of humanitarian and development aid to Africa. "I know it's important to the administration and to a lot of the members of Congress," he said.

"I know for a fact that the new chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa [International Relations Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights, and International Operations], Chris Smith [Republican of New Jersey], is very committed to Africa. Chris was in Darfur not

that long ago. He's [very enthusiastic] and really cares about these issues," Wolf said.

"So, I don't sense that Africans are going to be forgotten about. I think there will still be a great interest in Africa in the Congress."

For more information, see Darfur Humanitarian Emergency (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/darfur.html>). ♦