



Weekly Special Report



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Somalia Needs Power-Sharing, Expert Tells U.S., EU Lawmakers

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The main hope for a nonmilitary solution to the Somalia crisis is for the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to share power with moderate opposition groups, making national reconciliation a prime goal, a former ambassador told U.S. and European lawmakers.



David Shinn, Former U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia

Former U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia David Shinn, now an adjunct professor

at George Washington University, spoke June 8 at a meeting with members of the European Parliament and the U.S.

Congress, sponsored by the House Subcommittee on Africa.

Shinn said most observers agree that power-sharing is the key to sustainable peace in Somalia, and therefore "political reconciliation ... is the most urgent task." The question, he said, is how to achieve that reconciliation.

Finding a satisfactory solution to the current crisis in Somalia, where
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Nongovernmental Groups Key in Battle Against Human Trafficking

By Eric Green
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Many nations are working "hand-in-hand" with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to combat global trafficking in persons, says Mark Lagon, the State Department's new director of anti-trafficking issues.



Mark Lagon is the new director of anti-trafficking issues at the State Department

Speaking June 13, Lagon said governments that are

partners with NGOs have shown concrete gains in the global human trafficking fight, as documented in the State Department's new report on the issue. Lagon praised NGOs as the "eyes and ears" for monitoring trafficking abuses worldwide.

Lagon briefed representatives from about 90 NGOs on the State Department's report, re-
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Somalia Needs Power-Sharing, Expert Tells U.S., EU Lawmakers . . .

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Ethiopian peacekeepers battle insurgents in the streets of Mogadishu, "will not be easy, even if all the major Somali parties finally agree to act in the best interest of the Somali people and put their personal ambitions aside," Shinn told the lawmakers.

But a good result is not impossible, he added. "The first step should be the immediate initiation by the TFG of serious power-sharing with elements now excluded from power," he said.

As soon as that process has begun, the retired diplomat said, the Ethiopians quickly should begin their "final and complete departure from Somalia."

The TFG is the only Somali government recognized by the United Nations, the African Union, the Arab League and the international community, Shinn said, so it is important to help it "succeed, so long as it is willing to become a truly inclusive government."

The diplomat said the only groups that should be excluded from a Somali government are those that:

- urge war or support terrorist acts against neighboring countries;

- have indisputable links with terrorist or criminal organizations; and

- hold views so extreme that they would prevent a national government from functioning successfully and peacefully.

Shinn stressed that "plaintive calls for political dialogue ... will not result in a solution." Somalis, he added, "will dialogue the process to

death."

While conferences and months of discussion are part of Somali culture and tradition, Shinn said, the current situation calls for something different. "Time is running out," he said, "and I doubt that anyone has the patience to wait for a reconcilia-



Assistant Secretary of State Jendayi Frazer met Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and Prime Minister Ghedi in April. (AP Images)

tion conference that may never happen anyway."

He repeated that it is time for the TFG, instead, to reach out to its moderate opponents and bring them into the government. "It may be possible to convince enough of them to accept responsible positions so that the political factions in Mogadishu can then begin the real process of reconciliation and the isolating of hard-line spoiler groups."

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer touched on the reconciliation process at a Cairo, Egypt, meeting of the Somalia International Contract group in April, when she warned "spoilers" not to interfere in the Somali peace process.

Referring to upcoming reconciliation talks in Somalia, she added that

they should not exclude Islamist groups that recently fought the TFG. "There are many ways in which individuals who are Islamists or militias could be part of the process," she explained.

In May, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice highlighted her concern over Somalia as she announced the appointment of Ambassador John Yates as special envoy for Somalia. She said he would work with "the Transitional Federal Institutions and other key Somalia groups, as well as coordinate on Somalia with our regional and international partners."

Rice stressed that the United States is "committed to helping Somalis develop their national institutions and overcome the legacy of violence and disorder of the past. By supporting the people of Somalia in this effort, we are also contributing to the peace and stability of the Horn of Africa, and to the African continent as a whole."

To meet the humanitarian challenges posed by the incessant clan fighting that stepped up in 2006, the U.S. government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of State, has provided more than \$135 million in emergency assistance since October 2006.

During that period, the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration provided almost \$7 million to assist refugees in Somalia as well as in camps in Kenya, Yemen and Ethiopia.

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

Nongovernmental Groups Key in Battle Against Human Trafficking . . .

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leased June 12. He said Bolivia, Brazil, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Peru and Taiwan are "striking examples" of countries committed to the "rule of law" and "pluralism" that are working with NGOs, rather "than leaving the work" of trafficking victim assistance to NGOs. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=June&x=20070605161941bcrekaw0.5122492>).)

The seven nations' cooperation with NGOs is reflected in an improved anti-trafficking effort in 2006 as compared to 2005. The department's report advanced those countries from a Tier 2 "watch list" that signifies a failure to address trafficking problems to a higher Tier 2 category for a "significant" commitment against trafficking, said Lagon, whose formal title is director of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Human Trafficking in Persons.

NGOs at the briefing included the Washington-based Free the Slaves, which has produced three documentaries concerning labor trafficking in the United States and India. U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide are arranging screenings for foreign audiences of those documentaries, along with several other films that vividly display the evils of

trafficking in persons, which has been termed the modern-day equivalent of slavery. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=June&x=20070608130830X1eneerg0.3753168>).)

Also represented at the briefing was the Ricky Martin Foundation. The State Department named Martin, who founded the NGO, as one of its "heroes acting to end modern-day slavery" in its 2005 Trafficking in Persons report. The department said the famous singer was "lending a powerful voice to vulnerable children who are unable to speak for themselves" and "reaching tens of millions of people around the world." (See related article (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/human_trafficking/heroes_of_trafficking.html).)

Another group at the briefing was the Polaris Project, whose success in fighting human trafficking demonstrates the effective partnerships that can be built between NGOs and government. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=June&x=20070611180629adynned0.5134394>).)

Lagon told the NGOs that the department's 2007 report is dedicated to Ko Maung, who along with 30 other Burmese, died at sea pursuing a dream of earning enough money

to return to Burma and build a house for his children. Lagon said Ko Maung died from hard labor and starvation after being forced to remain at sea for years while being denied pay.

The 2007 report reiterated Lagon's praise for the groups worldwide who heard Ko Maung's "voice of agony" and are working against those who "rely on this despicable trade in 'disposable' humans."

For additional information, see 2007 Trafficking in Persons Report (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/human_trafficking/traffick_report.html).

More information (<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/>) on U.S. policies to combat human trafficking is available on the State Department Web site.

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Water Projects Improve Life for Displaced Persons in Uganda

Between 2002 and 2005, increased conflict as part of a long-running armed rebellion by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led many residents of northern Uganda to seek refuge in already crowded camps. As the population of internally displaced persons (IDP) increased from 600,000 to 1.4 million, camp conditions quickly deteriorated.

During the first half of 2005, 129 persons a day perished in the region. However, very few died as a result of the murder, looting or burning of homes committed by the LRA. Instead, most died in IDP camps, where poor sanitation and inadequate or contaminated water rendered them easy targets for diseases such as malaria and diarrhea.

Insecurity and population movements in the region hindered the provision of humanitarian assistance despite concerted efforts by relief agencies.

Where access to clean water is limited, mortality rates for children under age 5 increase dramatically. Severe water shortages also are associated with skin diseases, eye infections and increased incidences of diarrheal diseases and fatal dehydration. Vital nutrition programs cannot function without sufficient water for food preparation and basic hygiene.

Instability had long hindered the success of key water and sanitation projects in northern Uganda. However, improvements in security in 2006 enabled partners of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to expand activities

in both long-standing and newer camps for displaced persons.

In the Potika IDP camp in Kitgum District, little water was available because of a problem in drilling well boreholes within the camp's security perimeters. At the same time, camp residents were unable to access water sources outside security zones beyond curfew hours.

In response, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a USAID partner, developed a system utilizing a high-yield well outside the camp to feed into a water system within the security zone. The 14,400 camp residents now have access to more than 15 liters of potable water per person per day, the minimum humanitarian standard. They can safely access water at all times.

Community members helped secure land for the well and design the distribution system, and are providing system maintenance and management.

"We now have water close to our homes. We are living like town people who turn on a tap to get water. ... We shall do all we can to ensure we have this water running," said Ayaa Josephine, secretary of the camp finance committee.

Camp resident Aluku Betty added: "Even past 7 p.m., when we are not allowed outside the camp, I will be able to collect water for my family. I will have enough water for my family now."

As peace negotiations continue and security improves, a growing num-

ber of northern Ugandans are leaving the camps and returning to their home areas.

In Ligi Ligi settlement in eastern Pader District, little infrastructure remained to provide for the needs of returnees. Many people traveled long distances to collect water of questionable quality from streams and ponds, losing valuable time better spent on rebuilding homes and farming.

USAID provided funds to Cooperazione e Sviluppo (CESVI) to complete a motorized borehole that now provides sufficient quantities of clean water to more than 2,000 families returning to the area to rebuild their lives through agriculture.

The borehole has dramatically changed their lives, including that of Beatty Otto and her eight children, who had spent several years in nearby Patonga Camp.

Otto said her children are now able to draw clean water at any time of the day. And since they no longer have to venture far from home to collect water, she no longer worries about their safety.

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Documentaries on Social Relations, Politics Win at Film Festival

By Carolee Walker
USINFO Staff Writer

Silver Spring, Maryland – Films about social and political relations took home audience and jury awards at the weeklong Silverdocs international documentary film festival.

Top award winners *Please Vote for Me*, by Chinese director Weijun Chen, and *Enemies of Happiness*, by Danish filmmaker Eva Mulvad, use stories about the political campaign process to educate about democracy.

Please Vote for Me is the light-hearted story of three 7-year-olds campaigning to be third-grade class monitor in a school in Wuhan province in China. The film, which is in Mandarin with English subtitles at the festival, “touches our hearts with humor and humanity, while addressing complex questions about the future of China and the meaning of democracy,” said Patricia Finneran, Silverdocs festival director, at the awards ceremony June 17.

In the film, the director travels with the three candidates, two boys and a girl, to their homes and classroom, where they conduct real campaigns and are chosen in a free election.

In *Enemies of Happiness*, which follows the intense final weeks of Malalai Joya’s successful election campaign to the Afghan parliament, Joya uses the democratic political process to advocate for women’s rights amid death threats from powerful politicians opposed to her candidacy. Ironically, in May, just after the film was completed, the Afghan parliament voted to suspend Joya from her seat, citing a rule forbidding members from criticizing each

other. Joya is a vocal critic of Afghan parliamentarians who have ties to Northern Alliance warlords.

Silverdocs, organized by the American Film Institute (AFI) and the Discovery Channel television company,

Nine Iranian filmmakers screened clips of their new films in a cultural exchange hosted by AFI, in partnership with the festival and the Meridian International Center in Washington. The Iranian filmmakers are traveling to four U.S. cities over



Directors of the film *Enemies of Happiness* at the Silverdocs film festival in Silver Spring, MD. (Photo by Lauren Ruane/AFI)

is an annual documentary film festival that brings new long and short documentary films to Washington. This year, 100 films from 42 countries were screened over six days. Now in its fifth year, Silverdocs is becoming a well-known venue for international documentary filmmakers to access U.S. audiences, according to Finneran. At nearly all of the screenings, audiences are invited to participate in question-and-answer sessions with individuals associated with the films, including directors and producers.

three weeks to meet with American filmmakers in an open dialogue about filmmaking techniques.

FILMS SPOTLIGHT AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AT WORK

Two political films by American directors explore the theme of collaboration to confront and solve pressing issues. *State Legislature*, by director Frederick Wiseman, takes more than three hours to show audiences real life in small-town America, where most of the

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laws that hit close to home are enacted. Issues presented to the Idaho Legislature while the film was being made included whether kindergarten should be mandatory for all 5-year-olds and whether smoking in public spaces should be banned.

Wiseman spent an entire 12-week legislative session in Idaho, where "citizen legislators" debate the not-so-glamorous, yet important, laws of ordinary communities. Citizen legislatures are made up of elected officials who work in their normal jobs year-round but take time out to attend legislative sessions and enact laws. Citizen legislators, who rarely have political ambitions, bring professional experience to lawmaking and an enormous commitment to public service, Wiseman said in a videotaped message to the Silverdocs audience. The lawmakers know that when they go home after the legislative session they have to live with the same laws as everyone else, he said. "I am one of my constituents," a lawmaker tells Wiseman in the film.

Women set an example to men that politicians can work in a collaborative fashion, says U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell of Washington state in *14 Women*, which had its world premiere at Silverdocs on June 14. A documentary about the women who served in the U.S. Senate in 2006, *14 Women* is an engaging look at how the common bonds of female politicians can cross party lines. Republican and Democratic women lawmakers focus on health

care, education, employment, security and the environment, director Mary Lambert said at the premiere. So-called women's issues now have become human issues that are priorities for American voters, Lambert added.

FILMS FEATURE MUSLIMS IN AMERICA

Two short films exploring social relations in America feature Muslims who balance humor and commitment in their professional and personal lives.

The American director Yoni Brook's short documentary, *A Son's Sacrifice*, tells the heart-warming story of a Muslim man who quits his job in advertising to run the family halal slaughterhouse in Queens, New York. His modern approaches to organizing sales during Eid al-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice, test the son's faith and patience, but his connection to this vibrant and devout community is strengthened in the end. *A Son's Sacrifice* won the Silverdocs audience award for short films.

My Name is Ahmed follows the career of the well-known Muslim comedian who jokes about his name. "You can't hate somebody when he's making you laugh," Ahmed says in the film. "It's an interesting time to be Muslim in America," he says, and humor is a way to break apart stereotypes, he adds. Arab-American comedy has become very successful in the United States, director Matthew Testa told the Silverdocs audience, and if

stand-up comedians can change ideas about Muslim life in America, then that is a good thing, he said. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=June&x=20070615142154emohkcabhplar0.7033502>).)

Muslims and Arab Americans provide rich material for laughter and reflection, U.S. director Glenn Baker told an enthusiastic audience at the late-night screening of *Stand Up: Muslim-American Comics Come of Age* on June 13. From the Palestinian comedienne with cerebral palsy to the Arab American with a New Jersey accent, the Muslim comics in the film offer positive images of these ethnic cultures with self-effacing wit.

The American Film Institute maintains an extensive film library and trains filmmakers at its conservatory in Los Angeles.

The full text (<http://silverdocs.com/news-links>) of a press release announcing the winners of the 2007 Silverdocs film festival is available on the festival's Web site.

Additional information on AFI (<http://www.afi.com/>) is available on the institute's Web site.

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Activist Arab-American Comics Mine Stereotypes for Laughs

By Ralph Dannheisser
USINFO Special Correspondent

Washington -- There's nothing funny, we all know, about prejudice and stereotypes.

Well, actually there is -- at least when the Arab-American and Iranian-American members of "The Axis of Evil Comedy Tour" use them to make a point of their cultural pride, even while convulsing their audience with laughter.

The trio of comedian-actors -- Ahmed Ahmed, Aron Kader and Maz Jobrani, joined by guest performer Dean Obeidallah -- brought their iconoclastic routines to the annual convention of the Washington-based American-Arab Antidiscrimination Conference (ADC) June 9. The ADC, which describes itself as the country's biggest Arab-Americans civil rights group, was founded in 1980 by former Senator James Abourezk, the first Arab American to serve in the U.S. Senate.

Adding another wrinkle to the situation, the comedy group's convention show managed, at the same time that it skewered anti-Muslim prejudice, to call into question the stereotype of the FBI as zealously humorless: It was the FBI that sponsored the group's performance.

The agency paid \$10,000 for the privilege as part of a campaign to enhance its post-September 11 im-

age with Arab Americans and to boost recruitment of Muslims and Arab speakers, now in short supply in the FBI.



The comics of The Axis of Evil Comedy Tour perform in Washington June 9. (Axis of Evil Comedy Tour)

All the comics directed humorous barbs at the bureau presence. "It's so nice to be standing in front of the FBI and not be handcuffed," Ahmed said. Jobrani aimed his digital camera at two tables reserved for FBI agents in a turnabout-is-fair-play gesture, explaining, "I just want to take a picture of you."

Earlier in the day, the comics had taken part in a panel discussion that focused on their backgrounds, their path to onstage activism and their show-business aspirations.

Ahmed explained that the trio, who started as "The Arabian Knights" at Hollywood's Comedy Store in 2000, soon changed the group's name to "Axis of Evil Comedy Tour" in line with the appellation President Bush applied to Iraq, Iran and North Korea.

"Honestly, we're still looking for a North Korean. We need somebody immediately. We'll take a Pakistani at this point," Ahmed joked.

(In reality, the group also lacks an Iraqi: Jobrani is an Iranian American; Ahmed was brought to the United States from Egypt when he was 1-month-old; Kader and Obeidallah, both U.S.-born, have Palestinian fathers.)

Obeidallah, who once was a practicing attorney, recalled that he moved into comedy 12 years ago, when others

in his law firm encouraged him to enter a "funniest lawyer" contest. "Either they thought I was really funny or I really sucked at being a lawyer," he said.

While he started his new career for the potential fun of it, his approach soon evolved "from simply being entertainment to also a form of activism," Obeidallah said. "After 9/11 the world changed and my comedy changed with it, and it became relevant and newsworthy

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Activist Arab-American Comics Mine Stereotypes for Laughs . . .

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what we were doing," he added.

When critical issues arise, Obeidallah says, "You can give a speech about it or you can tell a joke about it, mocking it and show it the light of day. That's what's great about comedy. You can make people laugh at issues that are truly serious. . . . There might be things about people saying things about Arabs, or about Muslims, or Middle Easterners, and then you try to turn it around... and try to break it down at the same time."

Obeidallah also helped create "The Watch List," a series of stand-up and sketch snippets produced for the cable channel Comedy Central, and the four-year-old New York Arab-American Comedy Festival. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=November&x=20061120172423atiayduj0.3264582>).)

His colleagues have followed largely similar paths, from their disparate starting points, to activism via comedy.

Ahmed says he began in show business 15 years ago, playing "terrorists and cab drivers and, like, the sleazy Arab stereotype." When he became frustrated by that type-casting, he says, he asked his agent whether he could "go out and read for parts for just a guy who has

brown hair."

The agent's response that he was stuck with such parts so long as his name was Ahmed prompted him to shift course and try stand-up comedy -- after an intervening stint of waiting tables, joining forces with fellow aspiring comedians Jobrani and Kader.

Jobrani had a similar evolution. He says he previously played terrorists, but "I stopped taking those parts and I stopped taking those auditions."

Seeking support in Hollywood, Ahmed says, the group encountered responses that boiled down to, "There's nothing funny about you guys from the Middle East. Who wants to laugh with the enemy?" So they took their show on the road, renting theaters and playing to largely Arab-American and Persian-American audiences, to demonstrate the availability of a ready ethnic audience.

A high point was an appearance in July 2006 before 1,800 people at Washington's Warner Theater, he says, noting, "That's the only reason we got a Comedy Central [television] special" this past March.

Now, he says, the Axis trio has achieved a wider audience: "We've had such a great crossover ... 30-40 percent are white. ... So thank you, white people."

"Yes, we want to play to Middle East people and sure, we want to represent our voice, but we also want to get the silent majority of America," Ahmed says. "If they laugh with us, then the rest of the world will laugh with us, hopefully."

"Laughter is universal. It's like food or music. Everybody likes to laugh," he says.

See also "Palestinian American Challenges Ethnic Stereotypes with Humor (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2002&m=October&x=20021002173514skaufman@pd.state.gov0.6485712>)" and "Musical Film on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Wins Academy Award (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=February&x=20070226171610ndyblehs0.5014612>)."

For more stories on the influence of artists in society, see The Arts (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/the_arts.html).

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Arab-American Group Salutes the Achievements of Women

By Ralph Dannheisser
USINFO Special Correspondent

Washington -- High-achieving Arab-American women held the spotlight at an awards ceremony conducted by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), helping, as one participant said, "to end the stereotypes about Arab women."

Among nine award recipients at the June 10 luncheon session were a pair of media luminaries -- Helen Thomas, the senior member of the White House press corps, and Diane Rehm, host of a long-running interview program carried on National Public Radio -- as well as Representative Marcy Kaptur, an Ohio Democrat who is serving her 13th term in the U.S. Congress.

Adding an international element, the group gave its Diplomatic Trailblazer Award to Oman's Hunaina Sultan Al-Mughairy, the first woman from an Arab nation to serve as an ambassador to the United States. It presented its International Philanthropy Award to the Mosaic Foundation, a charitable group founded by the wives of 17 Arab ambassadors in Washington and dedicated to cultural, educational and development issues.

Al-Mughairy raised the issue of changing the stereotyped perception of Arab women.

She told of her visits to Capitol Hill, soon after taking her post in 2005, to meet with senators and representatives to push for approval of the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement, then under congressional consideration.

Al-Mughairy recalled that, on several occasions, a congressman arriving to meet with her and one of her

staff "would immediately welcome my male colleague, who he was certain was Ambassador Hunaina Al-Mughairy."

"Ironically, this awkward start worked to my advantage. The member would be so embarrassed



Omani Ambassador Hunaina Sultan Al-Mughairy is presented with the Diplomatic Trailblazer Award in Washington June 10. (AP Images)

that I probably could have asked for the moon and received it versus just a simple vote" for the free-trade agreement, she said to chuckles and applause.

"Trailblazing is something that women in the Arab world regularly undertake, whether in the family or in education, in business, the sciences, government or diplomacy. We have been accomplishing major achievements in our chosen endeavors at an escalating pace," the ambassador said.

She cited major advances in the Middle East in female literacy and access to education, asserting that "women now have the same educational opportunities as men in most Arab countries." And, she said, "political participation of women is progressively improving in the Arab

world," to the extent that "women [government] ministers are becoming common" in many Arab countries.

The ambassador praised the Bush administration for its Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), which, she said, "seeks to provide support for economic development in our region." The support of women "is a major component of that initiative," she added. The philanthropy award to the Mosaic Foundation was accepted by Nermin Fahmy, the group's chair and president, and wife of the ambassador from Egypt. Fahmy said that, in its first 10 years in existence, the foundation had worked to "improve the lives of women, children and families around the world." She pledged that it would continue in its determination "to insure dignity, respect and security."

The foundation has sponsored a number of projects that fostered international understanding, including a U.S. exhibit of Arab jewelry.

In introducing Kaptur, ADC President Mary Rose Oakar -- herself a former senior member of Congress -- praised her former colleague for consistently demonstrating that she is "for diplomacy when it comes to peace, particularly in the Middle East."

Kaptur told the audience, "As I see your vast and increasing numbers here today, I am reminded of that human struggle for inclusion ... [that] characterizes the work that remains before all of us.

"I know peace in the Middle East is possible," Kaptur continued. "But it requires inclusion: inclusion of the marginalized, inclusion of the dispossessed, inclusion of the unrepre-

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U.S. Law Officers Take New Approach To Combat Prostitution

By Lea Terhune
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – A new trend in U.S. law enforcement is the way police handle prostitution, at least in Montgomery County, Maryland. Investigators go after pimps who smuggle people for forced prostitution, while extending a helping hand to their victims, the prostitutes.

“The way we treat prostitution is completely different from when I first came up here,” Montgomery County vice squad Detective Thomas Stack told USINFO. “It was go out, pick them [the prostitutes] up, take them over to jail, that was it.” But not anymore, he said. “We treat every person as a victim, and it’s important that we should do that. Everyone is a victim first.”

Stack and his partner, Detective Leland Wiley, recently assisted in the successful prosecution of six people for crimes including transporting illegal immigrants from New Jersey and New York to engage in prostitution and money laundering. The investigation was coordinated among local police, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Internal Revenue Service.

Stack and Wiley described how Elsy “Yolanda” Aparicio and her family transported hundreds of women, mostly from Mexico, over several years to Maryland to service a primarily Latino clientele in brothels set up in apartments. The women were charged \$70 for food and \$40 for condoms each week; of the \$30 the women received for 30 minutes of sex, they kept \$15 to take back to their “padrotes.”

“Padrotes are pimps. They are responsible for the actual trafficking aspect, getting the girls over here to the States, and they lure them in

the usual ways, [promising] marriage or domestic work around here at a restaurant,” Wiley told USINFO. But when they get here, they are forced into prostitution.

The padrotes threaten to kill the women’s families in Mexico or shame them by disclosing they are prostitutes. The women are beaten and abused by the pimps, and are often victims of violence in brothel robberies. Gangs such as Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, extort payments or simply rob the brothels of cash. Each woman can bring in hundreds of dollars a day.

The detectives recounted cases of girls kidnapped or duped into coming to the United States. One girl, kidnapped from her remote village by a family of traffickers when she was 15 years old, was thrown in a basement and repeatedly raped by the father and brothers for a month before they put her in a brothel. She eventually was trafficked into the United States. After authorities discovered her, she took advantage of the assistance offered and has turned her life around. After being exploited for more than a decade, she now has a job, studies English and awaits her T-visa, a special visa given to trafficking victims in exchange for their cooperation with law enforcement officials.

A number of nongovernmental organizations work with police to assist victims. Polaris Project and Ayuda are two such support groups.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING A DOMESTIC ISSUE IN THE UNITED STATES

The detectives say most of their cases today involve illegal immigrants trafficked for sex or labor. According to U.S. Department of Justice figures, an estimated 17,500 foreign nationals may be

trafficked annually into the United States.

Wiley told USINFO, “When you say ‘trafficking,’ people think it’s an international issue. [But i]t’s not, it’s a domestic issue, too.” Run-away teenagers are frequent victims.

Much investigative work is done on the Internet. “It is absolutely out of control on the Internet,” Stack said. Instead of streetwalking, prostitutes and pimps now advertise on Craigslist or other Web sites.

Stack and Wiley speak at police academies, colleges, to firefighters, building inspectors and community groups on how to recognize the signs of trafficking. They say education is an important tool. Their informants range from paid contacts to apartment house managers and alert citizens.

Local and federal agencies work together -- if state lines are crossed, the FBI becomes involved. Federal penalties are stiffer. “These guys who are doing these heinous crimes,” who “force these women into prostitution” deserve long prison sentences, Stack said, “and they should get every day that’s coming to them.”

Hollywood contributes to the problem, Stack said. Films such as Hustle and Flow that glamorize pimps are used in the sex trade. “That’s a recruiting video for the pimps,” Stack said, adding that pimps make the girls watch movies and read books to learn the trade.

“These girls, for the most part, they are the victims ... because they are trafficked into this country and they are forced into prostitution,” Stack said. ♦

Foreign Players Help San Antonio Win Basketball Championship

By Tim Receveur
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – The popularity of the National Basketball Association (NBA) has been growing around the world as ever-increasing numbers of international players join NBA rosters and the games are broadcast to more places and in more languages.

The San Antonio Spurs symbolize this international movement in the NBA. The club had five players this season from outside the United States who played pivotal roles in winning the club its fourth NBA championship since 1999 on June 14.

International basketball players now represent roughly 20 percent of all NBA players, with 85 international players from 37 countries and territories now on teams. According to the NBA, there were only six foreign players on NBA rosters in 1979.

In addition, the global audience for the NBA Finals -- the league's championship round -- in 2007 was higher than any other year. Fans in more than 200 countries and territories watched the games in 46 languages, including Arabic for the first time.

The Spurs' overseas players are Francisco Elson, who has ties to Suriname and the Netherlands; Manu Ginobili and Fabricio Oberto from Argentina; Frenchman Tony Parker; and Beno Udrih, who hails from Slovenia.

The diversity on the Spurs' is evident not only by the faces on the

club, but also by the signs that hang outside the teams' locker room -- which have been translated into Dutch, Spanish, Slovenian and French.



San Antonio Spurs' Tony Parker shoots in the first quarter of Game 4 of the NBA basketball finals Thursday June 14. (AP Images)

Experts around the NBA acknowledge that the Spurs are the most successful team at signing talent from outside the United States. Spurs General Manager R.C. Buford says the team always has "tried to find good players wherever they were."

This trend likely will continue around the league after the overwhelming success of international players in 2007.

The Dallas Mavericks' Dirk Nowitzki

from Germany made history by becoming the first European to be named the NBA's most valuable player (MVP) for the season. Tony Parker became the first European in league history to win the NBA Finals MVP award.

There are several explanations for basketball's growing popularity around the world over the past decade.

Parker says he remembers staying up until 3 a.m. as a child to watch Michael Jordan play during the Chicago Bulls' dynasty of the 1990s. He credits the rise of the NBA in Europe to more games being broadcast there as well as increasing numbers of Europeans in the league.

"Before, everybody knew Michael, but that was about it. Now, European fans know the entire NBA. They know all the players. We have seven French players in the NBA, so now the [French] fans can get really interested in the teams and these players," said Parker in an interview on the Spurs' Web site.

Francisco Elson even has inspired a following for the Spurs in the small South American nation of Suriname. Elson has relatives in Suriname and vacations there, and according to the International Herald Tribune, local sportscasters have started referring to the Spurs as the "Dutch-Surinamese team."

Another well-publicized turning point in the rise of the NBA worldwide was the dominance of the so-called Dream Team at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain. That team featured several

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Bush, Israel's Olmert Express Support for Two-State Solution

By David McKeeby
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States and Israel support the creation of a Palestinian state that would live side by side in peace with Israel, President Bush says.

Speaking to reporters prior to a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert June 19, Bush said their countries share "a common vision, a vision that speaks to hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people, and a vision that speaks to the security of Israel."

"We share a common way forward, and our hope is that others in the region understand that this way forward leads to peace," Bush said.

Olmert's visit was scheduled months in advance, but the agenda was dominated by the recent violent takeover of Gaza by Hamas militants. In response, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas dissolved the "unity government" with Hamas and formed a new West Bank-based "emergency government" headed by independent former World Bank economist Salam Fayyad.

Bush praised Abbas, calling him a "voice of moderation" and "the president of all the Palestinians." Olmert pledged "to make every possible effort to cooperate with him [Abbas] and to look forward to see how things can be worked jointly in order to provide the Palestinians with a real, genuine chance for a state of their own."

Olmert pledged to initiate a new

round of regular direct talks with Abbas aimed at security issues and improving the delivery of essential services to the Palestinian people as a precursor to new progress toward the "two-state solution" long advocated by the Bush administration.

"This is the ultimate goal, to create a Palestinian state," Olmert said. "We have to prepare the groundwork that will allow -- soon, I hope -- to be able to start serious nego-



President George W. Bush welcomes Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel to the Oval Office Tuesday, June 18, 2007. White House photo by Eric Draper

tiations about the creation of a Palestinian state."

Bush added: "We want to have a vision for the Palestinians to see that there's a better tomorrow for them. These folks have been denied, for a long period of time, the right to a normal life."

The conflict between Fatah and Hamas, Bush said, highlights the ideological struggle between the forces of violence and moderation confronting many across the Middle

East, from Iraq to Lebanon to the Palestinian Territories.

"We face extremists and radicals who use violence and murder as a tool to achieve objectives," Bush said. This situation requires "a common strategy to fight off those extremists and to promote an alternative ideology based upon human liberty and the human condition and freedom," he said.

The international community, Bush said, has a clear obligation to redouble its efforts to support leaders such as Abbas and promote democratic reforms as a foundation for future peace and security in the region.

"They need help to build the institutions necessary for democracy to flourish," Bush said. "They need help to build security forces so that they can end up enforcing what most of the people want, which is to live in peace."

The United States is deeply committed to helping people in the region realize the benefits of democracy, White House spokesman Tony Snow told reporters later in the day.

"What we are trying to do within the Middle East is to figure out ways to empower those who are pursuing democracy," Snow said. "And we certainly have come to their aid when we can and when it is necessary."

Bush and Olmert also pledged to support aid shipments to address the humanitarian situation facing the 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza, whose borders with Egypt and Is-

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United States Welcomes North Korean Invitation to Nuclear Agency

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States welcomes North Korea's decision to invite international weapons inspectors back to Yongbyon as part of a multilateral agreement to shut down the North Korean nuclear complex there.

Christopher Hill, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs and lead U.S. envoy to the Six-Party Talks, told reporters in Beijing June 18 that North Korea's invitation -- accepted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) -- is a very important first step in the disarmament process and one that "we have been looking forward to for some time."

The Six-Party Talks involving North Korea, South Korea, Russia, Japan, China and the United States, seek to eliminate nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula.

Hill said the disarmament process will involve shutting down, taking apart and then sealing off North Korea's nuclear facilities so they are rendered "unusable for the future." The verification process will involve installing on-site television cameras that must be monitored by independent inspectors. An IAEA team will visit Pyongyang June 25 to determine what will happen next, and Hill said they are ready to move swiftly.

Hill said the process of disabling the nuclear complex, once under way, can be completed fairly quickly -- within days or a few weeks at most -- and probably will be done toward the end of 2007. Technically, the official said, the process "is quite doable," as long as the political will exists to do so.

Valuable time has been lost, Hill said, adding that the partners in the Six-Party Talks want to move quickly and, to the extent possible, make up time. The schedule laid out in the February 13 agreement reached by the Six-Party Talks participants originally called for North Korea to shut down and seal the Yongbyon reactor, allow international verification and provide a list of all of its nuclear programs to the other Six-Party Talks participants within 60 days. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=February&x=20070213150224esnamfuak0.8298456>).)

If the parties to the diplomatic process can get past this juncture, Hill said, there should be sufficient momentum to keep going forward.

Hill said he is looking forward to continued close consultations with the other nations engaged in the Six-Party Talks. He has been in Beijing to hear China's assessment of the evolving situation and will continue his consultations with South Korea and Japan. He said the heads of each delegation may meet in early July.

The most recent step forward was achieved through a great deal of cooperation among the Six-Party Talks participants, especially with the help of the Russian delegation, which "obviously worked very hard to ensure that the Banco Delta Asia (BDA) transaction could be completed." North Korea had demanded the release of more than \$25 million frozen at the Macau-based bank before it would continue participating in the Six-Party Talks. Macau authorities unblocked the funds April 10, but many banks remained reluctant to accept the funds due to concerns about possible money laundering or other illegal

financial activities at BDA. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=April&x=20070410165908esnamfuak0.1288263>).)

Resolving the banking issue took longer than anyone anticipated, Hill said, but now there can be a shift away from banking matters to the important subject of North Korea's nuclear activities.

The issue of transferring large amounts of heavy fuel oil to North Korea -- part of an emergency energy aid package promised in the February 13 agreement -- also must still be resolved.

"There are capacity issues on how much heavy fuel oil North Korea can receive per month," Hill said, but he suggested that the first of 50,000 tons could begin to move within weeks.

For more information, see Limiting Nuclear Weapons (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/us_nuclear_policy.html) and The U.S. and the Korean Peninsula (http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/east_asia_pacific/north_korea.html).

A transcript (<http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2007/86600.htm>) of Hill's remarks is available on the State Department's Web site.

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Bush, Israel's Olmert Express Support for Two-State Solution . . .

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rael have remained sealed since the Hamas takeover.

In a June 18 press conference, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced that \$40 million in new U.S. aid for Palestinians will be delivered through the United Nations, bypassing Hamas. The leaders also dismissed a recent proposal for

U.S.-brokered direct talks between Israel and Syria, whose support of Hamas and other terrorist organizations in the region long has been a concern for Washington. Should Israel deem such talks to be in its interests, Bush said, Israel should pursue them alone.

"They can handle their own negotiations with Syria," Bush said. "If

the prime minister wants to negotiate with Syria, he doesn't need me to mediate."

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Foreign Players Help San Antonio Win Basketball Championship . . .

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of the greatest players in NBA history, including Larry Bird, Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson and Charles Barkley.

"That forever will be the focal point of where the popularity in the sport just hit a springboard and really took off," says Terry Lyons, the NBA's vice president of international communications. "We ended up with just a lot of very good athletes picking up a basketball for the first time and then nature takes its course."

This year, a record 128 broadcasters provided coverage of the NBA Finals to a worldwide audience.

The Finals also were broadcast live in 15 languages direct from the NBA's Web site. The languages were English, Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian, Dutch, Flemish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Mandarin, Polish, Russian, Spanish and Tagalog.

For the first time, a TV station from the Middle East, Arab Radio and Television (ART) based in Jordan, sent a commentary team to cover the NBA Finals live in Arabic for

NBA fans throughout the Middle East.

"The NBA Finals is no longer just an American event, it is worldwide," said Mustapha Tell, ART head of sports. "While we have been showing NBA games on ART for years, this year for the first time we are attending the game and are right in the middle of it all and can share that excitement with our viewers."

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Arab-American Group Salutes the Achievements of Women . . .

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sented. Until there is inclusion, there will be no justice, and there will be no peace."

Rehm, host of a radio interview program since 1979, stressed her Arab identity --something of which many listeners seem unaware even though she refers to it frequently. "You bet I am" of Arab heritage, she said proudly, noting that her father had arrived in the United

States in 1907 from Beirut, Lebanon, and her mother in 1929 from Alexandria, Egypt.

ADC's Women's Democracy Award went to Barbara Anne Ferris, founder and president of the International Women's Democracy Center, a group that identifies its mission as training women worldwide with the tools to participate in politics and policymaking.

Ferris told of one successful pro-

gram that brought Israeli and Palestinian women to Washington "and put them in rooms together for a public policy training program."

"If we aren't sitting at the table, we're the meal," she told the audience.

(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. Heads Public-Private Fund To Aid Refugee Women, Children

By David Anthony Denny
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – The State Department is creating a new fund, to which private citizens and businesses can donate, to address the critical needs of refugee women and children.

Scheduled to be launched on June 20, World Refugee Day 2007, the International Fund for Refugee Women and Children is a partnership between the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and the private sector. It aims to deliver critical assistance to women and children refugees since they make up the majority of refugees fleeing violence and civil unrest.

The U.S. government has its own funds to help refugees. It has appropriated \$500 million annually to help refugees survive, and an average of \$300 million annually to help resettle refugees permanently in the United States. But government funding is devoted to the immediate survival needs of refugees, and often the long-term needs are overlooked in the competition for limited resources. U.S. government funds are targeted especially toward the critical first 90 days of a refugee-causing crisis. That is when the basic necessities for survival -- shelter, food and water -- are most vital, and local conditions frequently chaotic. But most crises continue beyond 90 days.

Assistant Secretary Ellen Sauerbrey, who manages the State Department's PRM Bureau and who conceived of the fund for private donations, said: "Refugees have typi-

cally been driven out of their homeland, lost their homes and beloved family members; they shouldn't also have to lose their future and their children's future." Education will be a key component of fund activities, she said.

ian aid and it has the wherewithal to monitor and evaluate an assistance project. Funds collected will go to PRM's regular implementing partners, such as Save the Children, World Vision and other respected humanitarian assistance organiza-



Women sing together in a refugee camp at the Samuel K. Doe Stadium in the Liberian capital Monrovia. (File photo AP Images)

Because of civil unrest and turmoil, many refugees are illiterate and their children cannot go to school, either. This fund will seek projects that address basic education and vocational training.

A SAFE, EFFICIENT WAY TO BE GENEROUS

The fund will offer individuals, corporations, and foundations a safe, easy and efficient way to give money. The State Department knows what and where the needs are for refugees, and especially where the gaps are in providing essential aid. The department also has extensive experience in humanitar-

tions, that are already on the ground. PRM officials envision making these new, private funds add-ons to existing agreements, eliminating an additional administrative cost.

The new fund is intended to address refugee plight after the first 90 days. For instance: Are the children in school? Are the women safe from further violence, and are they being given useful skills to help them care for their families now and to help support their families after the crisis ends? Too often, refugees spend years in camps outside their homeland before they can return home.

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U.S. Woman Veterans' Official Encourages Women To Enter Politics

Washington -- A decorated veteran of the Iraq war and congressional candidate in 2006 says women must participate in the political process.

"I think that the political process is incredibly important. We must participate," Ladda "Tammy" Duckworth said during a State Department-sponsored webchat from Thailand June 14. "I always tell people that if they don't vote, then it is the same as casting a vote for the winner."

Duckworth is a Thai-American who was appointed director of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs in November 2006. In Iraq, she commanded a 15-ship helicopter company and flew 200-plus combat hours as a Blackhawk helicopter pilot. During one mission in November 2004, a rocket-propelled grenade struck her helicopter cockpit and exploded, injuring her so severely that she lost both legs and nearly lost her right arm as well.

For her military service, Duckworth received a Purple Heart, the Air Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal and the National Defense Service Medal. In the 2006 elections, she ran for Congress in Illinois, losing by a little more than 4,000 votes. She said in the webchat that she has not yet decided whether to run for elected office in 2008, but she will decide soon.

Duckworth had advice for questioners from around the world, especially Africa. She stressed that participation in their countries' political process is crucial for women, both voting and running for office.

As for getting started in politics,

Duckworth said "a great way ... is to volunteer for someone else's campaign." Working on behalf of a particular candidate, she said, the volunteer can see what involvement in politics means and can develop

Duckworth also emphasized the importance of finding a mentor, someone who has run for office before. "You would be surprised to find that many people do not get



Army Major Tammy Duckworth, a Black Hawk helicopter pilot, lost both legs when her aircraft was hit by rocket grenades in Iraq November 12, 2004. She is a McKinley High and University of Hawai'i graduate.

her skills and ideas for her own political future.

Duckworth said women first need to get the support of their family, or at least one person close to them. Then, she said, they will need good people around them who can give them good advice and can tell them the truth.

"You need to have people you trust to talk to and help keep you on the path that led you to running for office in the first place," she said.

asked to be mentors and are happy and flattered to help," she said.

Duckworth said she thought that although women are interested in politics, "many of them are discouraged from participating."

"Many women become interested through family issues and then are drawn into other topics in government," she said. "I think women are more in touch with issues that can help families such as health

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U.S. Woman Veterans' Official Encourages Women To Enter Politics . . .

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care, education and women's issues. These issues affect all members of the society, not just women."

Noting that aggressiveness is necessary in politics, Duckworth said she thinks many women have been discouraged from being aggressive. Furthermore, she said, "many women who want to enter politics do not have the resources to do so." This drew her back to the need for a mentor, because "many men enter politics at the suggestion of a mentor."

Duckworth did not think an international organization to promote women candidates would be effective because each country has its

own political process.

"Perhaps each nation should develop its own [organization] and hold annual conferences of each country's organization," she said.

As for what to look for in a candidate, Duckworth said, "I think anyone who wants to be a good political leader, whether they are a man or a woman, should remember how most people live."

An effective candidate needs "to know what the majority of the people in your country needs, not just the needs of the wealthy. The next time you see a politician, give them the test, ask them if they know what one food staple of your culture costs. ... The politician who has an answer is in touch with the

people he should be serving," she said.

Referring to countries that have elected a woman as their highest official, Duckworth said: "I think what is needed is not so much an individual woman leader, but groups that help promote women and diversity in politics. Minorities and women need help breaking into government. We need more people helping them get in. In fact, this help can come from anyone, not just from other women or minority government officials."

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U.S. Heads Public-Private Fund To Aid Refugee Women, Children . . .

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There are examples of past efforts in this area. The International Rescue Committee, partnering with the State Department, organized teacher training for Liberian refugees while they were in refugee camps in Guinea and Sierra Leone. After 14 years of civil conflict, refugees now are returning home. Among the first to return are the teachers trained by the Rescue Committee, whose task will be to help build a bright future for Liberia's children.

FUND PRIORITIES

This new fund will target three priorities for refugee women and children:

Protection: Women and girl refugees are frequently at risk for rape or capture into slavery. For example, women refugees in Darfur are often raped while outside their camps seeking firewood.

Education: Teaching refugee children to read, write and count creates a generation of literate people capable of leading recovery and rebuilding efforts in their homelands. In the immediate term, it makes children less vulnerable to combatants who frequently seek to recruit boys as soldiers and to those who seek girls to rape and exploit.

Useful Skills: Literate mothers have the skills to continue their children's education when they are not in school and to learn better methods for caring for their families' health, hygiene and nutrition. Wid-

ows and single mothers, especially, need useful, work-related skills to support their families. Educating mothers allows their whole families to have a hopeful future.

More information about the International Fund for Refugee Women and Children (<http://www.state.gov/g/prm/hth/index.htm>) is available on the State Department Web site.

For further information about U.S. refugee policy, see Humanitarian Assistance and Refugees (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/refugees.html).

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Fulbright-mtvU Fellowship Sees Music as Force for Understanding

By Louise Fenner
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Four American university students will go overseas to research the music of other cultures and create compact discs (CDs), documentary films or Web sites that explore the power of music as a force for global understanding.

In separate projects, the students will travel to Cambodia, Panama, South Africa and Jerusalem. While abroad, they will share their experiences on blogs (Web logs), in photographs and video clips on mtvU, the MTV channel for U.S. colleges and universities.

The four are the first winners of the Fulbright-mtvU fellowships, a new partnership between the U.S. Department of State and mtvU, which has 7 million viewers on more than 750 campuses.

"We were looking to develop something that conveyed the power of music to serve as a cause for conversation, dialogue, solid communication," said Tom Farrell of the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which sponsors the various Fulbright fellowship programs.

Farrell said the students' research "will contribute to our understanding in the cultural field." He also said he hopes the blogs and videocasts they create for the mtvU channel and Web site "can convey to American students, and Americans in general, the value of immersion in other societies."

Ross Martin, director of programming for mtvU, said the creativity and diversity of the projects show that university students "in this

country are intensely interested in what's happening around the world."

The 100 plus applications were judged by experts in academia and the arts, including musicians Fiona Apple, James Mercer of The Shins, Common, and Perry Farrell of Satellite Party. "We were blown away by the submissions," Martin told USINFO.

Larnies Bowan, a graduate of New York University (NYU), will create an audio-visual history on CD of Panamanian reggae and its significance in West Indian-Panamanian culture. At NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study, she designed her own major focusing on national identity and race in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean.

Bowen said Spanish reggae helped West Indians in Panama maintain their Caribbean culture and also "express their new hybrid identity." However, the music "has been largely ignored by North American academia" even though it is the forerunner of reggaeton, a wildly popular mix of reggae and other Caribbean and Latin American music and hip-hop. Through reggaeton, Panamanian reggae "has exerted an extraordinary influence" on world music, Bowen said. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060815184422nainawhdaw3.490847e-02>)).

Phally Chroy, a master's degree candidate in film and media at Temple University in Philadelphia, will make a documentary on the rediscovery of the "golden era" of Cambodian music, which was almost wiped out by the Khmer Rouge. He will present monthly videocasts on mtvU during his research.

Chroy, who is of Cambodian heritage, said he wants his project "to create a greater understanding of the Cambodian people beyond the 'genocide' [of the late 1970s], which is all that most people seem to know about." His documentary is intended "to spread awareness of the rich cultural history that existed before the Khmer Rouge and to show how future generations are trying to re-salvage what they thought was lost."

James Collins, who graduated in visual and environmental studies from Harvard University in Massachusetts, will film a documentary about South African students in impoverished townships around Johannesburg who are being taught music, life skills and AIDS awareness through the Field Band Foundation, a U.S. nongovernmental organization. He will also teach percussion.

"Music has been such a guiding force in my life and an inspiration," Collins said. "I think [the South African students] may be able to appreciate music even more and see the value of it, and that's what I'm excited about."

He will use his mtvU blog to tell American students about the foundation and its work in South African townships, Collins said. "I also want to educate the mtvU community about South African music."

Aaron Shneyer will travel to Jerusalem to create a yearlong music program that brings together Israeli and Palestinian students to write and play music together. A graduate in anthropology from Georgetown University in Washington, Shneyer helped create a multicultural discus-

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Avian Flu Vaccine Stockpile Being Planned for Developing Nations

By Cheryl Pellerin
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Progress is being made in establishing a global stockpile for developing nations of a vaccine to protect against avian influenza, which has caused 190 deaths in 312 human cases identified since 2003.

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced June 14 that it is working with vaccine manufacturers to create a global stockpile of vaccine for the H5N1 avian influenza virus that it can distribute to the world's poorest nations on short notice in the event of an H5N1 pandemic.

On the same day, pharmaceutical firm GlaxoSmithKline said it would donate 50 million doses of a "pre-pandemic" flu vaccine that could help 25 million people (two injections per person) through the first several months of a worldwide outbreak while a pandemic-specific vaccine is being produced.

Three other manufacturers – Omniinvest of Hungary, Baxter International and Sanofi Pasteur, the vaccine division of the French Sanofi-Aventis Group – also have offered unspecified amounts of H5N1 vaccine for the stockpile.

"The United States is committed to working with member states and the WHO to explore other avenues to meet the near-term need for greater access to influenza vaccines, including pre-pandemic vaccines," U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt said in a May 23 statement.

GLOBAL STOCKPILE

Details about the stockpile have yet to be worked out, said WHO spokesperson Christine McNab during a June 14 USINFO interview.

"There will probably be a meeting or series of meetings to look at the operational use of [the stockpile]," she said, "and there are still lots of questions – is it a virtual stockpile; if not, where will it be stored; how



A biological technician tests samples while researching strains of the avian influenza. (AP Images)

and when would it be used; and which countries would use it?"

The announcement follows a request by the World Health Assembly – WHO's supreme decisionmaking body – in May that WHO establish such a stockpile.

"WHO welcomes this contribution from the vaccines industry," said WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan in a June 14 statement, "and is also working with countries to develop capacity for the production of influenza vaccines."

WHO is preparing for a potential flu pandemic with rapid containment plans to stop a pandemic by using public health measures (isolation, quarantine, personal hygiene and social distancing) and anti-virals,

helping countries increase vaccine-production capacity and promoting vaccine technology transfer to developing countries.

The stockpiled vaccines will be useful only if the H5N1 flu strain initiates the next flu pandemic, McNab said, but added that even if an entirely different strain of flu produces a global outbreak, the experience gained in establishing the stockpile will be valuable.

INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS

The revised International Health Regulations become effective June 15, bringing a comprehensive, tested set of rules and procedures into force for WHO and member states. The rules are intended to limit the international spread of pandemics, epidemics and other public health emergencies and minimize disruption to travel, trade and economies.

The revisions, approved in 2005, updated 1969 regulations that addressed only four diseases – cholera, plague, yellow fever and smallpox, a disease now eradicated.

The regulations are adopted by most countries as legally binding rules to contain disease threats that could spread rapidly from country to country. Threats include emerging infections like a new human flu virus or severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which caused a major epidemic between November 2002 and July 2003 with more than 8,000 known cases and 774 deaths.

"SARS was a wake-up call for all of us," Chan said. "It spread faster than we had predicted and was

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Fulbright-mtvU Fellowship Sees Music as Force . . .

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sion group called Students for Middle East Peace.

"I'll hopefully put together a really stellar group that can make some great music but also form a close relationship and learn from each other," he told USINFO.

Shneyer hopes the students will be able to perform at Palestinian and Israeli schools, and "take the trust and hope and understanding that they've formed and spread it."

His project includes creating a Web site in collaboration with the students. "It will let them know that their voices are being heard," he said.

Schneyer said his project "will also put a face to the conflict. You've only seen fighters on TV, you very rarely see musicians or kids."

"I would love to show the students [in America], and especially the music students, that these kinds of things are possible and that they can do a lot of things that can help out."

For information on State Department-sponsored exchange programs, see [Exchanges.state.gov](http://exchanges.state.gov) (<http://exchanges.state.gov/>).

Information about mtvU (<http://www.mtvu.com/>) and the Field Band Foundation (<http://www.fieldband.org.za/>) is available on their Web sites.

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

Avian Flu Vaccine Stockpile Being Planned for Developing Nations . . .

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only contained through intensive cooperation between countries which prevented this new disease from gaining a foothold."

Threats also could come from chemical spills, leaks and dumping, contaminated food and nuclear accidents.

TESTING THE SYSTEM

On June 15, WHO will hold the first of a series of exercises to sharpen its preparedness under the revised rules.

The exercise will verify new procedures for receiving, analyzing and responding to information about potential public health emergencies, and test and improve mechanisms in place in and between

member states and at different WHO levels.

A unexpected test of the fledgling system occurred in May, when a U.S. citizen with extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis, an airborne infectious disease, boarded commercial flights to and from Europe, and crossed the border from Canada into the United States despite an international alert about his condition.

In testimony June 4 before a U.S. Senate Appropriations subcommittee, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Dr. Julie Gerberding described the process of contacting WHO about the traveler, and said that CDC's notification process could be improved.

The International Health Regula-

tions "are wonderful," she told the subcommittee, "but there's no operational planning around them.

This is going to be the perfect case study for us to sit down with affected health ministries and the TB officials at WHO [to discuss] how we are going to create operational and tactical plans.

"Every country is going to have to come to grips with the same thing CDC did," Gerberding added.

"How do we keep people from [traveling internationally], how do we find out where they are, how do we handle them when we need to isolate them in someone else's country, and who pays?"

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