



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

"Lessons Learned" Seminar on WTO Accession opened

A one and-a-half day seminar on lessons learned from countries that have previously acceded to the World Trade Organization (WTO) has opened on March 22. The seminar which was held at the Hilton Hotel was opened by the U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Janet Wilgus and State Minister of Trade and Industry, H. E. Ato Ahmed Tusa.

The seminar was sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development, (USAID) in cooperation with the Ministry of Trade and Industry under the USAID Doha Project for WTO Accession and Participation.

Ethiopia formally applied for WTO membership in January

of 2003. A number of donors, including the United States, are supporting the WTO accession



DCM Janet Wilgus (L) with State Minister Ato Ahmed Tusa at the opening of the seminar.

process through technical assistance programs. The "Lessons Learned" seminar seeks to answer practical issues such as how to best organize government re-

sources to participate effectively in the accession process, and how to conduct the negotiations suc-

cessfully. It also consists of a series of interactive panel discussions.

In her opening remarks at

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One Year of Partnership in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS commemorated

U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Janet Wilgus on March 18, 2006 joined the President of Addis Ababa University (AAU), Professor Andrias Eshete, and Director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-Ethiopia, Dr. Tadesse Wuhib, to officially com-

memorate a partnership between the CDC and AAU to combat HIV/AIDS in the university community. Faculty deans, department heads, students, anti-HIV/AIDS club leaders, NGOs and other invited guests attended the ceremony held at AAU's Graduate School Conference Hall.

A cooperative agreement signed in 2004 between CDC and AAU provided a total of US\$ 380,000 (3.3 Million Birr) to scale up HIV/AIDS, TB and STIs (Sexually Transmitted Illnesses) prevention and treatment at Addis Ababa University. The program's major achievements include the estab-

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One Year of Partnership in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS commemorated . . .

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ishment of an HIV/AIDS Project support office (HAPSO); building the capacity of the university's clinics, discussion forums for staff students and strengthening the ART (Anti-Retroviral Treatment) program.

Speaking at the ceremony, DCM Janet Wilgus affirmed the US Government's commitment under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to

assist the university in its efforts to prevent and control HIV/AIDS within the university community and link the members of the community to care, support and treatment. She said that PEPFAR is also "an integral part of other programs that are designed to reduce poverty, develop the economy, provide food security, ensure repro-

ductive health and family planning services and contribute to the improvement of infrastructure throughout Ethiopia."

lumbia University has partnered with Alemaya and Jimma Universities, the University of Washington works with Mekelle and Gondar Universities, and the University of

California at San Diego is collaborating with the National Defense University and the Police Hospital.

PEPFAR will provide 1 billion Birr over the next twelve months in support of efforts to combat HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia. Through local and international organizations and partners in Ethiopia, PEPFAR is

making possible antiretroviral treatment provision to thousands of people, as well as care and support services to hundreds of thousands of those affected by HIV/AIDS, including orphans. It is also working with its partners to prevent new HIV infections through education and information campaigns. ♦



(L -R) U.S. Embassy DCM Janet Wilgus, President of Addis Ababa University, Professor Andrias Eshete, and Director of CDC-Ethiopia, Dr. Tadesse Wuhib, at AAU's graduate school conference hall.

"Lessons Learned" Seminar on WTO Accession opened . . .

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the seminar, DCM Janet Wilgus said, "I hope that today's seminar will enable members of the government and civil society to better understand the WTO accession process. By drawing upon the experiences of other countries, Ethiopia can successfully go through the accession process and reap the benefits of WTO membership." She noted, "Becoming a member of the WTO will help Ethiopia realize its potential by improving its international competitiveness. This, in turn, will help Ethiopia to increase ex-

ports, reduce poverty, and raise the standard of living for all of its citizens."

Other speakers at the seminar included Mr. Sok Siphana, Director of Technical Cooperation at the International Trade Centre in Geneva. Mr. Siphana was chief negotiator for Cambodia's WTO accession while serving as Secretary of State for Commerce.

The USAID Doha project, administered by the U.S. firm Booz Allen

Hamilton, has assisted a number of countries with WTO accession and has been working at the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI) since last year. The Project Team is currently reviewing existing laws and regulations and helping to draft new ones. This legal work is an essential part of the accession process. The Project also assists with capacity building activities.

Since 1995, twenty countries, including two least developed ones, have successfully acceded to the WTO. ♦

A Woman at Risk Starts a New Life

Fronyi Marese had no money and no one to turn to. She lost her parents when she was 7 years old, and since then each day was a struggle. "Surviving was a big problem... I had no money to live," said Fronyi. At the age of 17, not knowing where to go, she turned to the only option that seemed available: trading sex for money. She found the experience deeply humiliating. "I refuse to call it a life," said Fronyi, recalling her three years as a sex worker in Adwa, Ethiopia. "It was very bad. I have no words to express my bad feelings."

Fronyi's life in Ethiopia's dangerous sex industry began in a hotel. "I was hit and raped by the owners whenever they wanted," she recalled tearfully. "I hardly made any money, because they made me pay for the room I used, and I had to give the owners a percentage, so really, all that was left was money for food." Because she was not able to save money, and had no other skills or resources at her disposal to make an income, Fronyi felt trapped. To make matters worse, given the nature of Ethiopia's oppressive sex industry and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the population, she also feared for her life. "I think many people who come to us are sick," she said, implying that many of her clients probably carried the HIV/AIDS virus.

After three years, Fronyi found a way to escape the life she hated. Through a USAID-funded program aimed at preventing the spread of

prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS by taking steps to eliminate the sex trade. Current estimates show that 1.5 million people in Ethiopia live



Fronyi Marese, who received financial assistance from a USAID-funded HIV/AIDS church program, now runs a small business.

HIV/AIDS, Fronyi received \$200 to begin an income-generating activity. "When I heard her story, I knew we had to help," said one of the program coordinators. Safe from the dangers of her old life, Fronyi now runs a small store.

The USAID-sponsored program is run in coordination with local church communities, who seek to

with HIV/AIDS, and the disease claims 30% of all young adult deaths. But successes like Fronyi show that, with help and guidance, young women caught in the trap of the sex industry can break free and begin a new life. ♦

More Effective Medicine for Preventing Blindness Identified

Washington -- An easier, more affordable means of treating an eye ailment that causes blindness in millions has been identified through research conducted by the National Eye Institute (NEI) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Trachoma is an eye infection that is the leading preventable cause of blindness in the world. It causes trichiasis, a condition in which the



An Ethiopian trichiasis patient

eyelid turns inward, and eyelashes rub against the eye, resulting in corneal scarring and loss of vision.

Trachoma is spread through contact with insects, clothing, linens or other household items that might harbor the bacteria. It occurs in poor, overcrowded communities lacking clean water, decent sanitation or health care.

Trichiasis can be treated with a simple surgical repair of the eyelid,

according to a March 13 NEI press release, but infection often sets in after the surgery, causing a recurrence of the condition.

A clinical trial was conducted in Wolayta Zone, Ethiopia, to test the use of the drug azithromycin after the eyelid surgery. It was administered in a single oral dose instead of the usual follow-on treatment, a six-week regimen of antibiotic ointment.

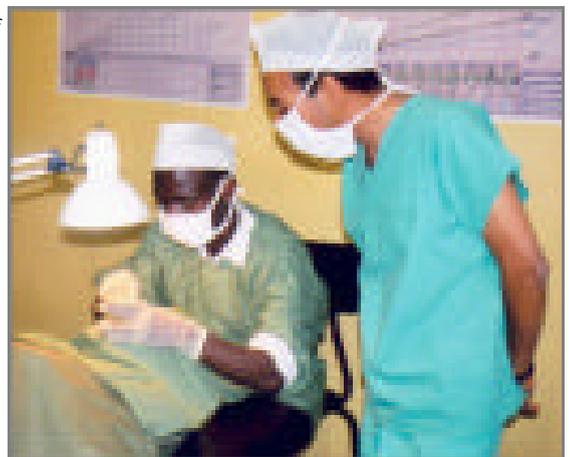
"In this study, by administering a single dose of azithromycin after eyelid surgery, we were able to reduce recurrence of trichiasis by 33 percent," said study chairman Sheila K. West of the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. "This finding has major implications for improving the outcome following surgery."

Worldwide, 11 million people develop trichiasis every year, so the NIH says the study will have an important influence in reducing the occurrence of blindness.

The full text (<http://www.nih.gov/news/pr/mar2006/nei-13.htm>) of the NEI announcement is avail-

able on the National Institutes of Health Web site.

See U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site, for additional information (http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/trachoma_t.htm) on trachoma.



A teaching ophthalmologist observes the surgical technique of an integrated eye care worker (IECW) in rural Ethiopia. In the STAR Study, trichiasis surgery was performed by IECWs. To ensure quality, all IECWs were certified for surgery by the STAR study team following World Health Organization guidelines.

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

President Bush Hosts Liberian President at White House

By Charles W. Corey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- President Bush held talks and hosted a luncheon at the White House March 21 for Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, praising the Liberian leader as a "pioneer" who has the courage, vision and desire to improve the lives of her people.

Sirleaf thanked Bush, the United States Congress and the American people for their support of Liberia as it transitions from war to peace.

"We want you to know that Liberia is going to do all it can to justify the confidence that you have given to us. Liberia, we think, has the potential to become the U.S. success story in Africa," she said.

ings " and build a new Liberia in the face of problems that still run "wide and deep" after years of civil war, she said. But there is "no quick fix" for the country's long-standing problems, she added.

Sirleaf -- the first elected woman to lead an African nation -- outlined her country's problems, which, she said, stem from years of mismanagement, corruption, bad governance, civil war and the massive looting of assets. Additionally, Sirleaf said Liberia suffered a death toll from its civil war of more than 250,000, and that thousands have been made homeless as a result of the long-running conflict.

Sirleaf reminded everyone that all Liberian children ever wanted to do was to go to school instead of being conscripted to fight in the civil war. With the war over, "now they want to [go to school] again, but the schools are not there."

Additionally, she said, hospitals have been destroyed, no medicines are available and the scourge of HIV/AIDS has made Liberia "one of the worst-affected in the subregion."

Unemployment now stands at 85 percent, she said, and the country owes \$3 billion to external creditors -- a debt whose repayment and servicing she called "beyond the realm of comprehension."

SIRLEAF CITES "WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY"

While the challenges are enormous, she said, "Our people are resolved and are not deterred. We have this window of opportunity

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President George W. Bush and Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf talk as they walk along the Colonnade from the Oval Office at the White House, Tuesday, March 21, 2006.
White House photo by Eric Draper

Speaking at a photo opportunity in the Oval Office, Bush said both he and Sirleaf had a "good discussion" and talked about ways the United States government can help Liberia.

One day earlier, Sirleaf delivered a major address on Liberia at the Center for Global Development in Washington as part of her March 14-23 visit to the United States.

Liberians are "determined as a people" to seize their "new begin-

Sudan Hinderin g Humanitarian Assistance

Washington -- The United States is "greatly concerned" over the government of Sudan's closure of the Sudan Social Development Organization (SUDO) offices in several locations, together with its health clinic and food distribution center in the western region of Darfur, U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said in a statement released March 20.

The government of Sudan also has frozen that organization's local bank accounts.

McCormack said the United States "will continue to work with the international community and nongovernmental organizations to support the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Sudan." He said the United States is especially concerned that the flow of international aid to the displaced people of Darfur be unimpeded.

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

Text of the State Department statement follows:

(begin text)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman

March 20, 2006

The United States is greatly concerned about the Sudanese government's closure of Sudan Social Development Organization (SUDO) offices in El Geneina and Zalingei on March 11, 2006. The commission also closed the organization's health clinic and food distribution center in West Darfur and froze its local bank accounts. The Sudan Social Development Organization is supported by the U.S. Agency for



International Development. The head of SUDO, Dr. Mudawi Ibrahim Adam, met with President Bush last week. The United States calls on the Government of National Unity to reverse its decision and permit the Sudan Social Development Organization to resume its essential work in West Darfur.

The humanitarian community in Darfur is serving the vital purpose of assisting those who are struggling and dying from displacement, hunger, and sickness, as well as the constant threat of violence. We support the efforts of organizations working there in such adverse conditions.

The Humanitarian Aid Commission should stop obstructing delivery of humanitarian assistance across the country. We are concerned that pending legislation, intrusive inspections of humanitarian vehicles, and exorbitant adminis-

trative fees and delays in the receipt of travel permits will further constrict the ability and add hurdles to the delivery of necessary assistance by non-governmental organizations.

We call on the Government of National Unity to address immediately all obstacles to delivery of humanitarian assistance and provide protection for civilians and aide workers in the affected areas. This includes ending intrusive inspections of humanitarian vehicles, and exorbitant administrative fees and delays in the receipt of travel permits. In this regard, the United States urges the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and the Humanitarian Aid Commission to extend the moratorium on restrictions on humanitarian activities for Darfur to ensure unfettered access by these organizations.

The United States will continue to work with the international community and nongovernmental organizations to support the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Sudan.

(end text)

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USAID Provides Additional Food Aid to Kenya

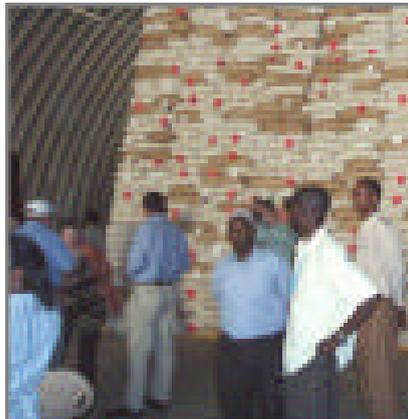
Washington -- The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) will provide \$16 million in emergency food assistance through the World Food Program to drought-stricken Kenya.

USAID's contribution will provide 22,090 metric tons (MT) of whole and processed food grains, peas and vegetable oil, which will reach as many as 3.5 million struggling farmers and herders, the agency said March 16.

With this recent additional assistance, USAID's response to the drought in Kenya in 2006 has been more than \$32 million, including 45,000 MT of emergency food aid.

A USAID press release states that the current pastoral drought crisis in the Greater Horn of Africa, which includes Somalia, Ethiopia and Djibouti, is particularly serious for approximately 7 million farmers and herders found in an arid region that connects northeastern Kenya, southern Somalia and southern Ethiopia.

USAID said that with the most recent rain failure, herders have lost tens of thousands of goats, sheep, cattle and even camels. Entire communities have been



A food warehouse in Wajir, Kenya, receives U.S. food aid for drought victims.

displaced from their homes and normal herding areas in search of food and water, and malnutrition is surpassing crisis levels. Rainfall is predicted to be lower than the annual average in the coming months.

Since January, USAID has contributed more than \$130 million in emergency drought relief, including 200,000 MT of emergency food assistance, to meet urgent needs in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and Djibouti.

USAID said it will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates as necessary.

The agency's Food for Peace program, which celebrated 50 years of service in 2004, has brought nourishment to more than 3 billion people in 150 countries. The agency itself has provided economic and humanitarian assistance worldwide for more than 40 years.

More information (<http://www.usaid.gov/>) about the agency and its programs is available on the USAID Web site.

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Vice President Notes Progress in Iraq, Afghanistan . . .

(Continued from page 15)
usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=March&x=20060307170940idybeekcm0.1617243&t=is/is-latest.html.)

The United States will not back down, Cheney said. "We understand the continuing dangers to civilization, and we have the resources, the strength, and the moral courage to overcome those

dangers and to lay the foundations for a better world."

For more information on U.S. policy, see Iraq Update (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.html), Rebuilding Afghanistan (http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/rebuilding_afghanistan.html), and Response to Terrorism (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/terrorism.html).

A transcript (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/03/20060321-6.html>) of the vice president's speech is available on the White House 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>) ♦

U.S. Navy Engages Suspected Pirates Off Somali Coast

By Ralph Dannheisser
Washington File Special Correspondent

Washington -- Two U.S. Navy ships returned fire on a group of suspected pirates in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Somalia March 18, killing one and wounding five.

The five injured and seven others were taken into custody, according to a press release issued by the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command the same day. Three seriously wounded suspects were being treated on one of the Navy ships and a Dutch Navy medical team was en route to assist, the Associated Press reported.

According to the Navy, the USS Cape St. George and the USS Gonzalez, were conducting maritime security operations in international waters about 46 kilometers off Somalia's central eastern coast when they observed a boat towing a pair of skiffs toward the coast.

The suspected pirates, who "were brandishing what appeared to be rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) launchers," opened fire on the Navy ships, which "returned fire with small arms in self-defense," according to the Navy.

A fire ignited aboard the main suspect vessel, the Navy said. While taking the suspects into custody, boarding teams confiscated an RPG launcher and automatic

weapons. No U.S. sailors were injured.

The U.S. ships were part of Combined Task Force 150, a coalition force currently led by a Royal Netherlands Navy commodore. The coalition forces "conduct maritime



A boarding U.S. Navy team off the coast of Somalia

security operations under international maritime conventions to ensure security and safety in international waters so that all commercial shipping can operate freely while transiting the region," according to the Navy.

Pirate attacks and hijackings have become a growing problem in the area, often targeting U.N. World Food Programme vessels carrying relief supplies to drought victims in the region.

Just days before the latest incident, The U.N. Security Council issued a statement that took note of "the increasing incidents of piracy and armed robbery," and encouraged member states with naval vessels and military aircraft op-

erating in the area "to take appropriate action to protect merchant shipping, particularly the transportation of humanitarian aid." The full text (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8662.doc.htm>) of U.N. Security Council March 15 statement on Somalia is available on the U.N. Web site.

The latest incident was reminiscent of one on January 21, when the U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer USS Winston S. Churchill captured a group of suspected pirates about 87 kilometers off shore. In that case the suspected pirate vessel responded to warning shots,

and there were no casualties. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2006/Jan/24-885135.html>).

The full text (http://www.news.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=22784) of the Navy's March 18 press release is available on the Navy's Web site.

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

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

U.S. Imam's Message of Self-Reliance Has Lasting Effect in Malawi

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The visit to Malawi of a prominent American imam has had lasting effects on the educational infrastructure of the developing southern African nation.

Following a series of sermons delivered by Imam Darryl Wainwright emphasizing self-reliance, Malawi's Muslim community decided to establish a business school at a mosque, using volunteer teachers. Wainwright toured the nation as part of the State Department's worldwide outreach program to Muslims.

According to a document provided by the U.S. Embassy in Malawi's capital, Lilongwe, the self-help project was inspired by the American imam's preaching after Juma'ah prayers at a mosque in the capital in October 2005.

The imam gave "an inspirational message that focused on the importance of education, hard work and self-reliance for Muslims," the embassy reported. When the congregation then asked him for money to start a school, Wainwright "encouraged them to look first to their own resources rather than waiting for outside assistance."

The American imam cited the example of his own mosque in Baltimore, which started a school completely on its own, employing volunteer teachers.

The group of young Muslim professionals in Lilongwe who took up Wainwright's suggestion began with one course, business accounting, and within a month the initial

class of five students had grown to 50.

The school's new principal, after contacting the U.S. Embassy to thank Wainwright for his help, said he hoped the school would help train Muslims who, in turn, could improve the social and economic welfare of Lilongwe's Muslim community.

The principal said his school could serve as a model for other mosques in Malawi, emphasizing: "We attribute all this to Imam Wainwright's visit."

UNITED STATES REACHES OUT TO MUSLIMS WORLDWIDE

In addition to the program that sponsors Americans traveling and lecturing abroad, the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program brings foreign religious and secular leaders to the United States to experience American culture firsthand.

U.S. outreach to Muslim communities also includes programs like "Shared Futures," which has distributed thousands of school kits to Muslim students in Africa as well as Muslim communities in Asia and the Middle East.

Local U.S. embassies also have used their funds to help refurbish mosques and restore ancient Islamic manuscripts.

Muslim outreach has been an important task as well for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in areas other than Africa. Starting in 2003, for example, the agency established the Islam Working Group to provide advice and guidance to development

experts working in Muslim communities in Europe and Central Asia.

USAID currently is operating programs aimed at building democracy and civil societies in 10 predominantly Muslim countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

MIDDLE EAST PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

President Bush established the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) in 2002 to promote democratic change through programs aimed at education and women's empowerment in Muslim communities. The program has had special success with entrepreneurial training of women in North Africa and the Middle East.

In 2005, MEPI organized the first-ever Business Women's Summit in Tunis, Tunisia. Two hundred women from 16 Middle Eastern and African countries attended, along with eight businesswomen from America. The result was the creation of a new Middle East and North Africa Business Women's Network. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2005/May/26-534098.html>)).

On the political level, MEPI's work with election-monitoring groups was credited with increasing the transparency of Lebanon's historic elections in 2005 and with providing support to more than 2,000 monitors in Egypt's first multicandidate election.

For additional information, see Middle East Partnership Initiative (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/me_partnership_initiative.html). ♦

U.S. House Passes Bill with Extra \$4.3 Billion in Foreign Aid

By Elizabeth Kelleher
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – The U.S. House of Representatives voted March 16 to approve a supplemental appropriations bill that includes additional funds for U.S. allies and foreign humanitarian relief.

President Bush, saying he “applauds” the House action, urged the Senate to “act promptly to pass legislation providing for these critical funds.”

The House bill would allocate a total of \$92 billion to pay for war costs, the reconstruction of U.S. areas devastated by hurricanes in 2005 and foreign aid, including assistance for Sudan and other parts of Africa. The measure would pay for expenses that have emerged since the time Congress passed its regular spending bills for the fiscal year ending September 30.

Of the total amount, roughly \$4 billion is earmarked for foreign assistance.

The majority of that money would be spent in Iraq -- \$1.6 billion for stabilization and local governance projects and \$1.1 billion for U.S. diplomatic operations there. The bill also would provide \$350 million for emergency, international food-assistance.

An amendment, which was adopted by the House in a close

vote, would increase funding for peacekeeping operations in Darfur by \$50 million. This would be in addition to \$253 million that the bill already allocated for peacekeeping missions in Sudan.

The bill would provide \$50 million for economic assistance to Liberia and roughly the same amount for migration assistance, mostly targeted to help refugees in Sudan, Liberia and Afghanistan.

In addition, the measure would allocate \$56 million toward promotion of democracy in Iran, only two-thirds of the amount requested by the administration.

The House did not approve the bulk of the administration’s request for Afghanistan because, according to the Appropriations Committee, that country is not cooperating fully with U.S. efforts to stop the planting of poppy, from which heroin is derived.

Beyond foreign aid, the spending bill would put \$19 billion toward disaster assistance for U.S. areas hit by hurricanes in 2005 and \$68 billion toward war costs in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The White House’s Office of Management and Budget released a statement March 15 opposing the elimination of some war-related funds the administration had requested. For instance, the bill would cut in half the amount

requested for building police facilities in Iraq and Afghanistan and reduce the amounts that would go toward support of Iraqi military forces or toward building urban-bypass roads in Iraq.

A provision would withhold money that previously had been approved to support the Palestinian Authority unless Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice certifies that the Palestinian Authority meets certain conditions, including official recognition of Israel.

The bill passed the House easily, by a vote of 348-71. The Senate plans to consider its version in April. Once any differences in the two spending bills are ironed out, both chambers have to approve a final version before the president can sign it into law. That likely would happen by the end of May.

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

Defense Official Says International Alliances Key to U.S. Strategy

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Building and maintaining international partnerships is a key aspect of United States military strategy, says Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England.

For example, the ongoing global war against terrorism, a major pillar of that strategy, can be won only by the United States acting "in partnership with coalition friends and allies," he told a group of military, diplomatic and academic strategists at a March 16-17 Washington conference sponsored by the National Defense University.

The conference was convened to discuss how the Pentagon's newly issued Quadrennial Defense Review should be implemented.

The QDR is a strategic document that "looks out 20 years," according to England, seeking to predict what military capabilities will be needed and set priorities for those requirements. He said the report is designed to move military planners away from a Cold War planning construct toward one that reflects "the diversity of threats that we have today."

Conference panelists focused on such QDR themes as:

Building and sustaining partnerships to defeat terrorism and extremism;

Organizing an adequate defense of the U.S. homeland;

Shaping choices for nations at strategic crossroads; and

Preventing hostile countries or nonstate entities from acquiring or using weapons of mass destruction.



Gordon England
Deputy Defense Secretary

England said it is enormously important to "change the Pentagon, the structure, the organization, [and] the decision-making . . . to fit what we want to achieve in the QDR in terms of strategic direction." The new strategy document, published in February, will generate more than 140 follow-up actions to be carried out in the coming two years, he said.

Navy Admiral Edmund Giambastiani, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also talked to conference participants about the QDR process.

It is important "to take stock every couple of years," he said, and assess lessons learned in conducting combat and post-combat

operations in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as from the military's work to promote stability and pursue reconstruction work in various parts of the world. Previous QDRs were produced in 2001 and 1997.

The Bush administration's proposed fiscal year 2008 defense budget, which will be submitted to Congress in February 2007, will draw heavily on the 2006 QDR. But this is "just the beginning," Giambastiani said, because the QDR will also factor into subsequent budget planning in coming years.

The QDR implementation team is very close to issuing strategic planning guidance to the Defense Department so the process can proceed. "We're incredibly serious about implementing this," the admiral said, adding that the same military and civilian leaders who developed the strategy are also charged with carrying it out.

The full text (<http://www.defenselink.mil/qdr/report/Report20060203.pdf>) of QDR report (PDF, 113 pages) and additional information (<http://www.defenselink.mil/qdr/>) about the report and its significance are available on the Defense Department's Web site.

For more information about U.S. policy, see International Security (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/>).

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

Women's Empowerment a Cornerstone of U.S. Policy, Official Says

By Lauren Monsen
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- President Bush has made women's empowerment "a key element of U.S. foreign policy" because "no society can prosper when women, who represent half the population, are marginalized," says Charlotte Ponticelli, senior coordinator for international women's issues at the U.S. Department of State.

On a March 16 State Department webchat, Ponticelli said that expanding women's rights is integral to the broader goals of advancing freedom, democracy, prosperity, and human rights in every society."

She also recapped U.S. efforts to promote women's participation in troubled parts of the world like Belarus.

"We are doing all we can to support free and fair elections and to strengthen civil society. We will continue to spotlight abuses and to encourage the full and active participation of women at this historic time," Ponticelli said.

In the United States, the outlook for women has changed considerably during the course of her own career, said Ponticelli. "I was talking to a colleague just this week and commenting that 20 years ago, if you were attending a high-level meeting in the State Department, you might have seen only one other woman at the table,"

she recalled. "Today, women are in high-level positions just about everywhere you go."

Women's empowerment is necessary even in countries where women claim to be content with



Charlotte Ponticelli, Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues at the U.S. Department of State.

limited rights, Ponticelli said, adding, "The first and most important tools for strengthening women's political voice are knowledge, skills, and awareness of their basic human rights."

The recent election victories -- and inaugurations -- of women presidents in Liberia and Chile offer evidence that women are assuming ever-greater roles in society, Ponticelli said. "New leaders such as Michelle Bachelet in Chile and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in Liberia are having a tremendous impact not just in their own countries and regions, but around the world," she said.

Ponticelli also took issue with the suggestion that female officials in developing countries are appointed primarily to create a false sense of inclusion, saying that "increasingly, new and emerging women leaders are making it clear that they are serious about their role and do not want to be perceived as 'window dressing.'"

Even though their numbers are still too low, women leaders "also realize that quality is more important than quantity in terms of the strength of their political voice," she added.

The transcript (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Archive/2006/Mar/16-383506.html>) of the webchat is available on USINFO's Webchat Station (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Products/Webchats.html>).

For additional information, see National Women's History Month (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/population_and_diversity/women_in_the_us/national_womens_history_month.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>) ♦

Democracy-Building Key To Fighting Terrorism, Rice Says

By Peggy B. Hu
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The spread of democracy around the world is essential to defeating terrorism, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in a town hall meeting with students in Sydney, Australia, March 16.

"Now, in times of challenge we need to remember that freedom and equality, democracy and opportunity, human dignity and individual rights are at the core of who we are. They make us greater than our small selves, and they summon us to defend our way of life whenever that way of life is attacked," she said.

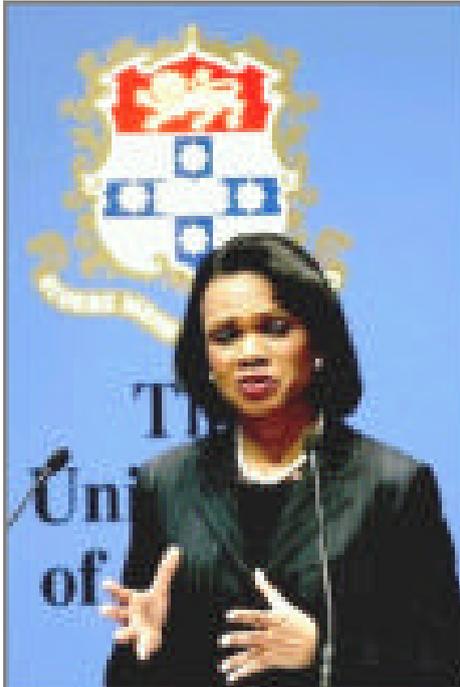
The secretary said that the United States and Australia support the cause of democracy, not "because we think ourselves perfect," but "because we know ourselves to be imperfect, with long histories of our own failures and false starts in our quest for just and perfect democracies."

According to Rice, the United States and Australia -- and other democracies around the world -- are now engaged in "a struggle of many decades that will require patience, and courage, and yes, sacrifice."

"Like every other war that our alliance has waged, the war on terrorism must be fought with the force of arms when necessary -- but it will not be won by force of arms alone. As in our struggles against communism, and Nazism, and militarism, it is the force of human freedom that will ultimately defeat an ideology of hatred and

violence," she said.

According to Rice, democracy helps prevent terrorists from gaining a foothold in society by providing a voice for the disadvantaged.



U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice answers questions during her address to university students in Sydney, Australia, Thursday, March 16, 2006. (AP Photo/Rob Griffith, Pool)

If you think about the roots of terrorism, she said, "if you think about what they are really drawing recruits from ... it is the hopelessness and the absence of freedom that gives them [terrorists] an opportunity to speak ... in these extreme ways on behalf of the disadvantaged."

"If, instead, people who are disadvantaged, people who have concerns, people who have com-

plaints, people who have been disadvantaged in one way or another, have legitimate channels through which to go to address their grievances, I cannot believe that it will be more popular to make your children suicide bombers than to send them to university," she said.

FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY

The secretary also discussed the importance of fighting poverty.

According to Rice, President Bush "has been a very big proponent of foreign assistance." She said that since the beginning of the Bush administration, the United States has increased its official development assistance by half, tripling assistance in Africa and doubling assistance in Latin America. (See Global Development and Foreign Aid (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/global_development.html)).

"There is a very deep commitment in this administration to making life better for the poor and for those who live still in poverty," she said. She warned, however, that the provision of such aid "can only really take place in the context of accountable governments and democratic governments, because we know what happens when that assistance goes to those who don't govern wisely.

"We know what happens when that assistance goes to those who are corrupt. We know what happens when that assistance goes to those who are not accountable to

(Continued on page 14)

Democracy-Building Key To Fighting Terrorism, Rice Says . . .

(Continued from page 13)

their own people. And so democracy and development go hand in hand and that's how we see the fight to defeat this ideology of hatred that breeds terrorism."

MIDDLE EAST

In response to a question regarding the Palestinian election of Hamas, which the United States considers a terrorist organization, Rice said, the international system has to hold fast to two principles. "The first is that if you are elected, you have to govern democratically. In other words, being elected and then starting to subvert democratic institutions is not acceptable.

"Secondly, if you are elected, you have an obligation to recognize that you can't have one foot in terrorism and one foot in the political process. In other words, the gun and the ballot can't go together. And that is the discussion, that is the requirement, that is being placed before Hamas at this point," she said. (See *The Middle East: A Vision for the Future* (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/me_vision.html).)

"Democracy is ... more than just having elections. It's also institutions. It's also rule of law. It is also the ability of democracies to

deliver for their people," Rice said.

RUSSIA

On Russia, Rice said the international community should be concerned about "the centralization of power in the Kremlin."

"I say to my Russian colleagues very often that no democracy survives without checks and balances and countervailing institutions, whether it's a strong parliament or an independent judiciary or political parties," the secretary said.

Rice said the United States has been trying to encourage Russia "to allow civil society to develop, to allow political parties to develop, to allow ... a truly free press, to have an independent judiciary and to have a parliament that has an independent say."

"The progress is not even and there have been some setbacks and some reverses," she said.

Rice said she hopes the Russian people "will find their voice to demand accountable, transparent institutions and to demand the ability to organize themselves to petition their government and, if necessary, to change their government peacefully through democratic process. After all, that's what the essence of democracy is."

The secretary said that excluding Russia from "institutions in which these values are paramount," such as the Group of Eight (G8) or the NATO-Russia Council, will not encourage democracy.

"I do think we have to continue to speak loudly for the development of Russian democracy and to say to Russia that that is what is expected of a country that is a great power and that at least has started down this road," she said. (See *Russia* (http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/europe_eurasia/russia.html).)

For more information on U.S. policies, see *Response to Terrorism* (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/terrorism.html) and *East Asia and the Pacific* (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/>).

A transcript (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/63166.htm>) of Rice's remarks is available on the State Department Web site.

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Vice President Notes Progress in Iraq, Afghanistan, War on Terror

By David I. McKeeby
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States will continue to be active in the fight against terrorism, using its armed services, law enforcement, intelligence and homeland security agencies as tools to prevent further attacks, says Vice President Cheney.

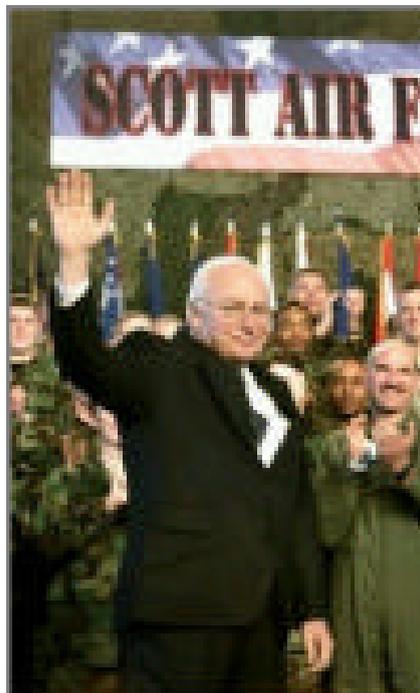
"Either we are serious about fighting this war or we are not. And the enemies of America need to know: We are serious, and we will not let down our guard," Cheney told military personnel at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois March 21. "The war on terror is a battle for the future of civilization. It's a battle worth fighting. It's a battle we're going to win."

Cheney said that nowhere illustrates the continuing challenge of terrorism better than Iraq, where three years ago this week, America liberated the country from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=March&x=20060321132200ajesrom0.1787226&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html>).

"There is no doubt that the situation in Iraq is still tense," Cheney said, noting that "as the Iraqi people step forward to participate in the government of their country, the terrorists will continue to commit acts of random terror, calculated to shock and intimidate the civilized world."

But Cheney said that coalition and Iraqi forces continue "doing remarkable, heroic, honorable work

each and every day" to maintain security. Thanks to U.S. training, he said, Iraqi security forces rapidly are gaining greater operational independence, now having primary responsibility for more than 77,700 square kilometers of their country -- more area than coalition forces.



Vice President Dick Cheney waves as he arrives on stage at Scott Air Force Base in Ill., Tuesday, March 21, 2006. (AP Photo/Jason Reed, Pool)

Cheney said that continuing extremist attacks are a sign of desperation because "the terrorists know that as freedom takes hold, the ideologies of hatred and resentment will lose their appeal, and the advance of democracy will inspire reformers across the broader Middle East."

Cheney predicted that as the Iraqi military and the political process progresses, "we'll be able to decrease troop levels without losing the capacity to defeat the terrorists. And as always, decisions about troop levels will be driven by the conditions on the ground and the judgment of our military commanders on the scene." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Mar/02-825803.html>).

Cheney also praised U.S. efforts to rid Afghanistan of the Taliban regime and al-Qaida. Although coalition and Afghan forces still actively are rooting out remnants of Taliban, al-Qaida, and other armed militants, Cheney said that four years later, "Afghanistan is a rising nation -- with a democratically elected government, a market economy, and millions of children going to school for the very first time." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=March&x=20060316174008idybeekcm0.8790552&t=is/is-latest.html>).

Cheney said that terrorists view the entire world as a battlefield in their continuing campaign to remove American and Western influence in the Middle East as part of an effort to establish an empire based on their extremist vision of Islam.

Their aim, Cheney said, is "to arm themselves with weapons of mass destruction, to destroy Israel, to intimidate all Western countries, and to cause mass death here in the United States." (See related article (<http://>

(Continued on page 7)

U.N. Security Council Moving Toward Agreement on Iran

By Judy Aita
Washington File United Nations
Correspondent

New York -- The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council are "on the road to agreement" on a presidential statement against Iran's nuclear enrichment program, U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns said March 20.

Emerging from a meeting with senior government officials of the five permanent council members and Germany, Burns said that group is "unified because we all want to achieve a presidential statement that will invite the Iranians to suspend their nuclear program, return to negotiations, and to put themselves in compliance with the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] board of governors."

"As so often in diplomacy, we now search for the words to reflect that unity -- which I think we will be able to do," Burns said.

"The United States very much prizes the unity that has been achieved over the last six months where Russia and China and the U.S. and the European countries have all acted together to pressure Iran and to try to convince Iran to give up its search for its nuclear weapons capability," Burns said.

The meeting had two separate components, the under secretary said. One was to discuss the text of the presidential statement being prepared in the U.N. Security Council. The other was to consider longer-range issues.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The 15-nation U.N. Security Council was scheduled to hold a closed-door session on the proposed presidential statement March 21, but neither Burns nor other diplomats at the meeting gave any indication when the council would be ready to adopt a statement at a formal public session. They said that meetings would continue at U.N. headquarters in New York, in Vienna, Austria, and elsewhere.

"We remain convinced we will achieve a presidential statement," the under secretary said. "It may take a little bit of time, but it is going to be worth the time because when we do achieve that statement it will be yet another clear, unified message by the international community that Iran has to heed the words of both the IAEA and the U.N. Security Council."

Burns said that the five permanent members -- China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States -- which hold veto power in the council, agree on four main points:

- Opposition to Iran's efforts to acquire a nuclear weapons capability;
- Acknowledgement of Iran's noncompliance with its international commitments;
- Recognition that Iran now is traveling down a road towards enrichment and reprocessing that fundamentally will be detrimental to the interest of the world of non-proliferation and of peace and security; and

· Agreement on staying united to send one message to convince the Iranians to roll back their nuclear program, suspend all their nuclear activities and return to full negotiations.

"The elements of the agreement are there," Burns said. "We all agree the Iranians have gone too far, that they should not have a nuclear weapons capability, that they should stand down on their nuclear programs."

He gave no indication on whether the group was able to find common ground on two unresolved issues. One involves how long to give the IAEA to work with Iran before reporting back to the Security Council. The other is over which body -- the Security Council or the IAEA -- will oversee the issue.

However, Burns did say that while the IAEA always will have a responsibility to inspect Iran and bring it into compliance, Iran's nuclear program "has clearly moved also to the Security Council."

"It is in both places. It is not going to leave the Security Council," he said.

For further information, see Arms Control and Non-Proliferation (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/arms_control.html).

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U.S. Battle Against Human Trafficking Intensifies

By Jane Morse
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The Bush administration has intensified its battle against human trafficking with encouraging results: Convictions of human traffickers have jumped 109 percent in five years, according to the Department of Justice.

Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales issued an 89-page report March 15, showing that from fiscal year 2001 through fiscal year 2005, the Justice Department filed 91 trafficking cases, an increase of more than 300 percent over the number of trafficking cases filed during the previous five years. In these cases, the department charged 248 trafficking defendants -- a 210 percent increase over the previous five years. Additionally, the department obtained convictions for 140 defendants of trafficking-related crimes -- a 109 percent increase -- over the previous five years.

Gonzales unveiled the report at the 4th Annual Freedom Network USA Conference, "New Voices and Strategies on Human Trafficking," at the Chicago-Kent School of Law.

In his remarks, Gonzales condemned human trafficking as modern day slavery and traffickers, who frequently subject their victims to horrific abuse, as "peddlers of broken promises."

The victims of traffickers, he said, frequently are "vulnerable people who hope for a better job or a better education or a better life - only to fall prey to someone's evil plans of servitude and slavery."



The U.S. Justice Department, along with local law enforcement and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) is taking "an aggressive, proactive, and victim-centered approach to prevention, investigations and prosecutions," Gonzales said. "We've deployed a comprehensive strategy that includes federal and state lawmakers, dedicated investigators, tough prosecutors, the international community, and the partnership of federally-supported victim services and outreach programs," he said.

In addition to catching more human traffickers, this approach has helped nearly 1,000 human trafficking victims and directed more than \$30 million in grants to task forces and victims groups across the United States, he said. "Thanks to the Justice Department's strong working relationship with many victim-services groups," Gonzales said, "there are a number of success stories that span the universe of human trafficking victims - migrant field workers, indentured servants, sweatshop workers, and child and adult sex slaves."

Gonzales praised the work of victim-services organizations that

counsel and help rehabilitate the trafficking victims. "Victims of human trafficking often are without a voice or advocate. They too often are uneducated, unsophisticated, and unable to speak English. But they are not undeserving of our help," he said. He also said that once assured of their safety, the victims are more likely to testify against the traffickers.

"We can't solve the problem only by helping victims," Gonzales said, "we have to take down the traffickers who trade in exploitation."

Also on March 15, Gonzales announced that the U.S. Justice Department, working with international authorities, charged 27 individuals involved in a private Internet "chat room" used to facilitate the trading of thousands of images of child pornography worldwide, including streaming videos of live molestations. Those charged were citizens of United States, Canada, Australia and Great Britain.

The full text (http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/speeches/2006/ag_speech_060315.html) of Gonzales March 15 remarks and a fact sheet (http://www.usdoj.gov/whatwedo/whatwedo_ctip.html) on human trafficking are available on the department's Web site.

For more information on U.S. policy and programs, see Human Trafficking (http://usinfo.state.gov/global_issues/human_trafficking.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>) ♦

Intellectual Property Rights Seen as Key to Economic Progress

By Mildred Neely
Washington File Staff Writer

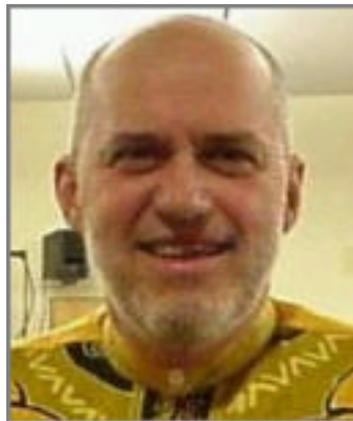
Washington – Countries that protect intellectual property rights (IPR) in today's world are better situated to support creativity and benefit economically, says Thomas G. Field Jr., law professor and IPR expert at the Franklin Pierce Law Center, New Hampshire.

In a webchat March 17, Field said: "As the world shrinks, countries increasingly need to decide whether they want to limit themselves to low-margin raw materials or to share in markets for high-margin finished goods. If the latter, they need to create a legal infrastructure [for IPR] to support the needed intellectual infrastructure."

As an example of the value of IPR to an economy, Field discussed the creation and manufacture of clothing, which he said is perceived as "more useful" than raw cotton. According to Field, patent protection -- one of the leading forms of IPR -- encourages creative individuals to devise improved equipment and processes "to make production and distribution cheaper."

"That, in turn, makes finished clothes available to more people at lower cost." Countries that export these cheaper, better-quality finished goods usually outpace those that export just raw materials, such as cotton, Field said.

Field said that IPR itself has changed as new production means are developed. "Copyright had little use before the creation of the printing press," he said. But he said as technology for distributing information has changed, the law has adapted to meet new chal-



Thomas G. Field Jr

lenges. "The World Wide Web," he added, "has resulted in a need to protect domain names lest consumers be defrauded by people pretending to be someone they are not."

The goal of IPR -- "to encourage the creation of new goods and services to make people's lives more pleasant in all respects" -- has remained constant throughout changes and innovations, Field said.

Asked whether the folk traditions of a country can be protected un-

der copyright, Field saw problems with protecting traditional works. First, copyrights expire at some point -- usually a certain number of years after the death of the author or artist, he said.

According to Field, that raises a second issue: Who was the author? Was there one or many who added bits and pieces over a long time? "And, of course," he concluded, "part of the last issue is who owns or can enforce the copyright? A village, a tribe or some other identifiable group?"

The transcript (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Archive/2006/Mar/17-873358.html>) of the webchat is available on USINFO's Webchat Station (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Products/Webchats.html>).

For additional information, see Protecting Intellectual Property Rights (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/intellectual_property.html).

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U.S. Enhances Plan To Detect Entry of Dangerous Bird Flu Strain

By Kathryn McConnell
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States has enhanced its strategy for detecting if a highly pathogenic avian influenza (bird flu) enters the United States.

The interagency early detection strategy, announced March 20 by the secretaries of agriculture, interior, and health and human services, identifies monitoring and testing wild birds entering the state of Alaska from eastern Asia and the Pacific as the highest priority. The route, known as the Pacific Flyway, includes western Canada and the United States and continues down through Central and South America.

The United States then will address bird migration routes covering the central and eastern parts of the country, the secretaries said. The eastern route involves birds flying from Europe into Canada and then to the United States.

At a press briefing at the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the officials said the United States also is coordinating with international agencies to track the spread of the highly pathogenic bird flu strain H5N1, which has spread to three continents but has not yet been detected in the Western Hemisphere.

The three officials agreed it is highly probable that H5N1 could be found in the United States in 2006. However, finding the highly pathogenic flu strain in birds in the United States "doesn't signal the start of a [human] pandemic," USDA Secretary Mike Johanns said.

Early detection would give U.S. agencies the opportunity to attempt to contain the virus within a geographic area and obtain samples necessary for developing a pandemic vaccine, according to a pandemic planning strategy issued March 13 by the Department of Health and Human Services (The pandemic planning update (<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/pdf/pandflu20060313.pdf>) of the update (PDF, 12 pages) is available on the department's Web site.)

Johanns said the media is important in helping to inform the public about any discoveries of bird flu but news organizations must do so in ways that do not cause unnecessary alarm.

The United States is working to communicate to countries around the world essential information for planning for and, ultimately, coping with a potential pandemic, according to the Health and Human Services update.

EMPHASIS ON MONITORING, EARLY DETECTION

The enhanced monitoring plan is intended to provide an early warning to agriculture, public health and wildlife communities, the officials said.

The strategy highlights five action steps:

Investigating instances of a significant number of birds becoming sick or dying;

Additional monitoring of live, apparently healthy, wild birds, which represent the highest risk of being infected with H5N1;

Targeted sampling of birds killed by hunters at Interior Department stations, primarily in Alaska;

Targeted sampling of birds from flocks raised in household yards for noncommercial purposes and from wetland duck flocks that might come into contact with wild birds; and

Sampling water and feces in waterfowl habitats.

All test results will be shared with the public, the officials said.

Although the role of migratory birds in the transfer of H5N1 is not clear, the flu strain has been identified in an increasing number of wild birds, Interior Secretary Gale Norton said.

If a highly pathogenic strain of bird flu is detected in wild birds, USDA will monitor poultry operations in the affected area to minimize contact between wild birds and domestic animals, said Johanns.

The enhanced strategy was developed by wildlife-disease biologists, veterinarians and epidemiologists and provides standard procedures for sampling and diagnostics for governments, universities and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved in monitoring bird flu, according to an interagency fact sheet (http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1RD?print-able=true&contentidonly=true&contentid=2006/03/0093.xml) available on the USDA Web site.

"The global nature of pandemic preparedness and the enormity of

(Continued on page 23)

U.S. Program Saves Priceless Artifacts in Congo, Madagascar

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- It may not be an earth-shaking international political event, but the residents of Shaba province in southern Democratic Republic of Congo now can thank American partners for rescuing part of their cultural heritage from the ravages of nature.

In 2005, the Lubumbashi National Museum received a \$21,000 grant to repair a leaky roof, courtesy of an innovative partnership program established by the State Department called the Ambassador's Cultural Preservation Fund.

The fund has been partnering with local cultural institutions, not just in Africa but worldwide, since its inception in 2001, funding 292 projects since then. In 2005, the fund awarded grants worth \$2.5 million for 87 projects in 76 countries.

According to a document provided by the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, the ambassador's fund paid for roof repair on the main building of the Lubumbashi museum to stop valuable ethnographic, entomological and archeological collections from being damaged by torrential downpours that plague the region.

New metal doors and reinforced windows also were installed in the museum to ensure better security, and the building's walls were repainted.

The fund also paid to preserve the museum's collections of plants, animals, insects, ceramics, paintings and artworks made of

wood, stone and hides, with the embassy reporting that they were being "treated and maintained with chemical products and insecticides to protect them from deterioration" for up to two years.

Using the embassy fund, the museum also acquired eight new display cases for its entomological exhibits. In addition, it purchased vacuum cleaners, thermometers and an air conditioner to guard the exhibits against excess heat and humidity. The museum also installed new curtains in the exhibition rooms to protect against the sun.

Two computers, a digital camera and a global positioning system (GPS) were also purchased with money from the embassy grant.

The computers will transfer information from fragile paper records of the collections into an electronic database and a Web site built to increase "research capacity," according to the embassy.

The cameras will be used to make photographs of exhibits for use in research and for display at scientific meetings. Archeologists will employ the GPS system to locate and fix archeological sites in difficult terrain.

FUND WILL SAVE HISTORIC DOORS IN MADAGASCAR

In Madagascar, the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation began a program to save historic carved wooden doors and windows found in Marovoay, Mahajanga and other areas in the northwest of the island nation.

According to a press release from the U.S. Embassy in Antananarivo,

Madagascar, U.S. officials are working with scholars at the University of Mahajanga, as well as with members of the Bohra community in the northwest, to preserve the intricate Indo-Arabian carved doors and windows, believed to date back to the 18th century.

The artworks are functional and represent Madagascar's role in "the vibrant Indian Ocean trade," the release said. They are also "visual reminders of the cultural exchanges among East Indians, Arabs and East Africans with the Malagasy people" 300 years ago, it added.

When the preservation project is completed in August, the embassy reports, "Mahajanga and Marovoay will have a new tourism jewel to share with the world. New historical walking tours, museum exhibits ... and books will be in place so that all can share in this unique piece of Madagascar's cultural heritage."

SAVING MANUSCRIPTS IN KOSOVO, CARPETS IN TURKMENISTAN

Outside of Africa, the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation also is running successful partnership programs in Kosovo and Turkmenistan, according to the State Department Web site.

In Kosovo in July 2005, Philip Goldberg, chief of the U.S. Office in Pristina, awarded a grant to the Institute for the Preservation of Monuments in Prizren to help save deteriorating antique manuscripts in the library of the Gazi Mehmed Pasha Mosque.

(Continued on page 22)

Schoolchildren Worldwide To Observe the Night Sky for Science

Washington – Schoolchildren around the world will gaze skyward after dark March 22-29, looking for specific constellations and then sharing their observations through the Internet.

The initiative, called GLOBE at Night, could help scientists map light pollution around the world, according to a March 14 press release from the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in Colorado.

Participants in the worldwide campaign will observe and record the magnitude of visible stars as a way to measure light pollution in given locations. The project has a goal of 5000 observations.

GLOBE at Night is a special project of the GLOBE Program (Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment), a worldwide science and education program funded by NASA and the U.S. National Science Foundation and supported by the U.S. Department of State.

Students from more than 17,000 schools in 109 countries have participated in GLOBE, reporting more than 14 million environmental observations, thanks to the efforts of 109 countries and 129 U.S. partners. This will be the first GLOBE activity to engage students in astronomy.

"The observations made during GLOBE at Night will help students and scientists together assess how the quality of the night sky varies around the world," said GLOBE Education Director Sandra Henderson.

The observations, she added, "will also help us better understand how outdoor lighting that's not well designed can waste energy and block our view of the stars."



The ancient Greeks saw the figure of the Greek myth Orion in the nighttime sky.

Light pollution is a growing problem for astronomical observing programs around the world. According to the International Dark-Sky Association, a large percentage of outdoor lighting is directed skyward, contaminating the night sky and wasting billions of dollars in electricity per year.

Teachers, students and parents will work together on GLOBE at Night, said Project Coordinator Kirsten Meymaris.

GLOBE at Night was inspired in part by a similar project carried out in Arizona and Chile by the National Optical Astronomy Observatory and the Centro de Apoyo a la Didactica de la Astronomia, which cosponsor GLOBE at Night.

By having students in many places search for the same constellations, such as Orion, GLOBE at Night will allow the students to compare what they see with what others see, giving them a sense of how light pollution can vary from place to place. The young observers also will learn more about the economic and geographic factors that control light pollution in their communities and around the world.

The University Corporation for Atmospheric Research and Colorado State University manage the GLOBE program.

More information (<http://www.globe.gov/GaN/>) about GLOBE at Night is available on the project's Web site.

The press release (<http://www.ucar.edu/news/releases/2006/globe.shtml>) is available at the NCAR Web site.

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United States and Partners Work Toward Clean Water for All

By Charlene Porter
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – The United States, the World Health Organization and other international partners are launching a new initiative to help countries deliver safe drinking water to their citizens.

Announcement of the campaign came March 20 from the Fourth World Water Forum under way in Mexico City. The event, March 16-22, coincides with World Water Day March 22.

The campaign focuses on an Internet resource, the WS Portal, which offers access to health-based risk assessments that identify problems in a water system and offer corrective actions to address those problems, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Poor water quality causes diseases in more than 3 billion people worldwide each year, with children under age 5 the most severely affected group. E. coli, salmonella and cholera are among the diseases that can be transmitted through water.

"March 22 is World Water Day, and I am pleased that the U.S. can now announce a new tool for



countries to address a very serious global problem," said Judith E. Ayres, the EPA's assistant administrator for the Office of International Affairs.

"For countries to move forward in providing a better life for their citizens," she added, "clean water and adequate sanitation are essential first steps."

The WS Portal is considered a first step in the widespread dissemination of best practices for delivering safe drinking water

through the use of Water Safety Plans (WSP). The EPA has provided initial financial assistance in developing the Web site and is involved in WSP demonstration projects in Jamaica and India.

Other partners in the clean water initiative are the World Bank Water and Sanitation Program, the Australian Agency for International Development, the United Kingdom Department of International Development, the New Zealand Ministry of Health, the International Water Association and Water for People.

World Water Day, initiated at the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development – the Earth Summit – in Rio de Janeiro, has been recognized internationally since 1992.

In 2006, the theme is water and culture, emphasizing the key role that water has played in the history of civilization and the daily conduct of people's lives.

For additional information, see the Web sites of WSPortal (<http://www.who.int/wsportal/en/>), World Water Day (<http://www.worldwaterday.org/>), ♦

U.S. Program Saves Priceless Artifacts in Congo, Madagascar. . .

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In presenting the award, Goldberg said Prizren is a fitting location for cultural preservation because it is a "symbol of Kosovo's multi-ethnic and multireligious past and, we hope, a symbol of its multi-ethnic and multireligious future."

In 2004 the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation helped maintain a unique collection of carpets from the 17th and 18th centuries in Turkmenistan. The money helped the National Carpet Museum of Turkmenistan in Ashgabat save 30 carpets.

A spinoff from the program is a series of master classes by local

weaving experts for specialists in preservation, conservation and restoration methods.

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U.S. Enhances Plan To Detect Entry of Dangerous Bird Flu Strain . . .

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potential impacts are fostering a spirit of collaboration across the world," according to Health and Human Services.

The United States is working with other countries to develop coordinated bird flu monitoring and international transparency of new findings, said HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt.

Leavitt also emphasized the importance of local planning for a potential pandemic. He said that HHS will have held community planning meetings in all 50 U.S. states by May.

The Department of the Interior is responsible for monitoring and protecting wildlife. USDA is responsible for the safety of domestic flocks of poultry. HHS is responsible for effects on human health of diseases.

H5N1 first appeared in 1997 in Hong Kong. Since then U.S. wildlife experts and public health officials have been monitoring the spread of the highly pathogenic virus.

The full text (http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_10B?contentidonly=true&contentid=2006/03/0095.xml) of USDA's interagency early detection strategy is available on the department's Web site.

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

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President Bush Hosts Liberian President at White House . . .

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and would like to use it well" to start to rebuild Liberia under a freely elected government.

Sirleaf said Liberia's progress will rest on several key factors: peace and security and the need for continued reconciliation and tolerance; the need for a functioning and fair justice system; good governance, transparency, an end to corruption and the implementation of full accountability for all public officials.

Speaking for her government and ministers, she said, "We will have to set the example at the top ... to manage the affairs of state and protect the public trust."

Sirleaf said her government already has started to practice effective resource management by can-

celing some 80 unjust forestry concession agreements to show "we are serious about correcting some of the malpractices of the past." Liberia has vast forest and water resources.

Sirleaf, a former banker, said her government is in the process of paring the nation's bloated civil service and hopes to regain Liberia's international creditworthiness and become eligible for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and, eventually, the Millennium Challenge Account. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2006/Feb/09-211241.html>).)

What is most essential, Sirleaf told her audience, is to "create a vibrant private sector that will create the conditions that will enable

the country to achieve long-term economic growth and development."

While there is no quick fix, Sirleaf said she is encouraged by the spirit of the people and the fact that the country is "well endowed" with forestry and agricultural resources.

She recalled her remarks to a joint session of the United States Congress March 16, noting, "We will succeed because we have no other option but to succeed!"

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