



# Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

## INSIDE

### African news

Diplomats Cautiously Optimistic on Darfur Peacekeepers (P 3)

Negroponste Signals Khartoum about U.S. Concern over Darfur (P 4)

USAID Helps Kenyans Develop Community-owned Elephant Sanctuary (P 5)

Trafficked Children Return Home in Benin (P 6)

### American issues

United States Mourns Shooting Deaths at Virginia Tech (P 7)

U.S. Balancing Needs of Refugees, Thwarting Terrorism (P 8)

Muslim Women in America a Diverse Group, Scholar Says (P 9)

U.S. Community Offers Help When Mosque Suffers Fire Damage (P 10)

U.S. College's "Coexistence House" Promotes Religious Tolerance (P 11)

Iranian Photography Exhibit Shows Americans a Personal Iran (P 12)

Tribute to Baseball Great Jackie Robinson Benefits Charities (P 13)

### International news

United States Emphasizes Importance of Protecting Press Freedom (P 14)

Egypt, United States Work Together To Reduce Traffic Deaths (P 15)

### Economic Issues

Developing Nations Can Influence Global Trade Talks, USTR Says (P 16)

Treasury Chief Says IMF Must "Re-Invent Itself" To Stay Relevant (P 17)

Treasury's Paulson Says More Work Needed on Trade Imbalances (P 18)

U.S. Seeks Boost in Monetary Fund Currency Market Surveillance (P 19)

## USAID/CJTF-HOA Improvements to Abiot Ermija Primary School

On April 18 U.S. Ambassador Don Yamamoto visited the site of a school renovation project at Abiot Ermija Primary School in Kirkos sub-city, Addis Ababa. A U.S. military Civil Affairs Team from the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) is working with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to renovate administrative buildings, and construct a new library facility, latrines, playground and community hall. The Ambassador told journalists invited to join the visit that the U. S. govern-



Ambassador Yamamoto talking to a school official of the Abiot Ermija Primary School during the visit, accompanied by USAID/Ethiopia Mission Director Glenn Anders

(Continued on page 2)

## Bridging the Religious Divide

Religious leaders bring family planning to Muslim district

Alaba, a predominantly Muslim district in Ethiopia, suffers from chronic drought and famine. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus/South Central Synod started delivering family planning services in Alaba in 1997. It was the first community-based family planning program located in and



Imam Wol-chafo, a prominent Muslim leader in Alaba

around Alaba town. It was not an easy beginning, trying to explain the benefits of family planning services to a community suspicious of their agenda.

"No one understood what they were talking about," said Imam Wol-chafo, a prominent Muslim leader in Alaba. Because the church is a Protestant faith-based organization, Alaba residents

(Continued on page 2)

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## USAID/CJTF-HOA improvements to Abiot Ermija Primary School . . .

*(Continued from page 1)*

ment supports community centered development work in Addis Ababa and elsewhere in Ethiopia. An example of this, he added, is the joint work being carried out at Abiot Ermija Primary School by CJTF-HOA and USAID.

USAID/Ethiopia Mission Director, Glenn Anders, said USAID will furnish the school with computers, books, teaching aids and other supplies. Similar projects are planned for schools in Dire Dawa and Debre Zeit. Nine Naval engineers (also known as "Seabees" from CJTF-HOA) are working at the construction site, which will be finalized in September 2007. ♦



Seabees carrying out construction work at the Abiot Ermija Primary School.

## Bridging the Religious Divide . . .

*(Continued from page 1)*

feared they had a religious agenda. "Before Pathfinder and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church started in our Woreda (district), nobody cared about our problems," he said at a regional population forum where he spoke on community-based reproductive health and family planning programs.

"Our women delivered many children. Due to early marriage and frequent childbirth, all the women suffered physically and all the children were malnourished," the Imam

commented. "Only a third of us had healthy physical statures; everyone else was stunted or malnourished. Men also suffered physically and economically. Harvests were not enough to feed their families."

Community leaders from Alaba went to the Ministry of Health office at the local level to confirm that the program's mission was to deliver health services and not evangelical messages. The local government confirmed that the intentions of the reproductive health and family planning program are poverty alleviation by relieving

population pressure. Since then the Ethiopian Evangelical Church has been working in harmony with Alaba District authorities and the community, with support from USAID and Pathfinder International. At present, 100% of the district is covered by community-based reproductive health agents delivering services at the community level. ♦

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## Diplomats Cautiously Optimistic on Darfur Peacekeepers

By Judy Aita

USINFO United Nations Correspondent

United Nations -- The Security Council has welcomed Sudan's acceptance of increased U.N. support for peacekeepers in Darfur, but council members are proceeding cautiously until the much-needed reinforcements are actually on the ground in the region.

"The test is going to be the implementation," said U.S. Ambassador Alejandro Wolff.

"I sense a general sense of frustration among council members that every time there is an indication that something has been agreed to, then conditions are set up or delays are imposed," Wolff said.

"We've been down this path before," he told journalists after a special Security Council session on Darfur. "So we'll see if it happens when it happens." After stalling for five months, on April 16 Sudan informed the United Nations that it would accept the so-called "heavy support package" from the United Nations to help bolster the beleaguered 7,000 African Union (AU) peacekeeping force now in the region. The package includes 3,000 U.N. police and military personnel, along with six helicopter gunships, and is the first significant U.N. contribution to the AU troops. Sudan had been opposing the helicopters.

The "heavy support package" is the second phase of a three-step plan that will ultimately lead to a hybrid U.N.-African Union peacekeeping force of 17,000 troops and 3,000 police officers throughout Darfur. The first-phase "light support package" of technical support, police advisers and civilian staff has al-

ready been deployed. After a visit to Sudan April 16, Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte said the hybrid force was critical.

"We must move quickly to a larger hybrid United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force with a single unified chain of command that conforms to U.N. standards and practices," Negroponte told journalists in Khartoum.

Sudan faces "continued and possibly even intensified international isolation" if it doesn't implement the U.N. plan, Negroponte said.

At U.N. headquarters, the 15-nation Security Council met with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, top U.N. officials involved in Darfur and senior officials of the African Union, including Chairman Alpha Oumar Konaré, to discuss the major aspects of the political process, humanitarian access and peacekeeping.

Ban called Sudan's agreement "a very positive sign." He said the U.N. and the AU intend "to move quickly to prepare for the deployment of the heavy support package and the hybrid force" while also intensifying diplomatic efforts to facilitate peace agreements and protect civilians in Darfur.

"The people in Darfur have suffered too much and too long. The international community should do whatever we can do at this time," Ban said.

U.S. Ambassador Wolff said that Security Council and African Union members have "a common sense of purpose ... of the urgency for movement and the need for vigilance. This has been going on far too long."

The timeline for expanding the Darfur peacekeeping force has slipped several times in the past year. The mandate for the African Union force expires in "just about 75 days," the ambassador noted.

Wolff emphasized that the international community expects Sudan to accept the United Nations-African Union peacekeeping operation.

"There is no doubt among council members -- or, for that matter, the AU representatives here -- that the hybrid force is the natural follow-on phase to the light support package and now the heavy support package. The heavy support package ... is a transitional contribution to allow the hybrid force to get into place," the ambassador said.

The United States and the United Kingdom have been discussing a resolution that would increase sanctions on Sudan for its failure to cooperate on Darfur. U.S. and British officials said that no decision has been made on whether to press for sanctions in light of Sudan's acceptance. A decision will be made after Negroponte returns from his visit to Sudan and other countries in the region later in the week, Wolff said.

As the violence, deaths and sufferings continue, the "frustration level rises and the tolerance" for Khartoum's delays diminishes and "people are sorting the need for other measures," Wolff said.

The United Nations has estimated that more than 200,000 people have been killed and 2 million others displaced from their homes in Darfur since 2003. ♦

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## Negroponte Signals Khartoum About U.S. Concern over Darfur

By Jim Fisher-Thompson  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte has concluded his first trip to Sudan, where he visited refugee camps in Darfur and met with President Omar al-Bashir, conveying the "widespread concern" in the United States about the continuing violence in the western region.

In meetings with Bashir and other top Sudanese officials, Negroponte said, "I focused in particular on the situation in Darfur, a situation of intense interest on the part of the American people and our government."

Negroponte also said he conveyed "the U.S.'s commitment to the complete and urgent implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement [CPA]."

At an April 16 briefing in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, Negroponte said it was only his second trip abroad since assuming the number two position at the State Department in February. In addition to Sudan, his April 11-19 trip also includes stops in Chad, Libya and Mauritania.

He also visited Juba in southern Sudan, where he met First Vice President Salva Kiir, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the southern political movement that battled the Khartoum government until the CPA was signed in January 2005, ending the almost 20-year conflict.

In Darfur, Negroponte said, he discussed humanitarian and peace-keeping issues with United Nations, African Union (AU) and Sudanese officials. Noting that the crisis has

three components -- humanitarian, political and security -- he declared, "All these components deserve the prompt attention of the Sudanese government."

On the humanitarian front, Negroponte said the United States is "the single largest donor to Sudan, more than \$2 billion in aid since 2005, and we are working hard to protect vulnerable populations [refugees] there."



U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte addresses the press at the U.S. embassy, N'Djamena, Chad April 17. (AP Images)

The civil war that broke out in Darfur in 2003 has claimed more than 200,000 lives and pushed 2 million people out of their homes. A Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was signed in May 2006 by the Sudanese government and several rebel groups, but violence by government-backed Jingaweit militias and some rebel groups continues.

Negroponte said the DPA "offers great promise and opportunity to the people of Sudan. [But] it can only be realized through the active

efforts of the Sudanese government [and] a quick transition to a U.N.-AU force, and improvement in access for humanitarian workers."

The problem, the diplomat said, is that "when it comes to humanitarian access, the government of Sudan's record is not encouraging. The denial of visas, the harassment of aid workers have created the impression that the government of Sudan is engaged in a deliberate campaign of intimidation." Khartoum's recent agreement with the United Nations to facilitate humanitarian operations is "an encouraging sign," Negroponte said, adding, "We will be watching carefully and expect prompt implementation."

On the security front, Negroponte said: "The government of Sudan must disarm the Jingaweit, the Arab militias that we all know could not exist without the Sudanese government's active support. The nonsignatory rebel groups must stop their attacks, put down their arms and come to the negotiating table."

To ensure the peace in Darfur, Negroponte said, "we must move quickly to a larger hybrid African Union and United Nations peace-keeping force with a single united chain of command that conforms to U.N. standards and practices."

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

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## USAID Helps Kenyans Develop Community-owned Elephant Sanctuary

Not far from the beaches of Kenya's South Coast is one of the first community-owned and -managed ecotourism ventures in East Africa: the Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary (MES).

The sanctuary dates from the early 1990s, when the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) to help local farm communities form a wildlife reserve on their own land.

Elephants long had migrated across the area, and generations of Duruma and Digo people had grown maize (corn) and other crops in the same place.

Then, in the 1980s, elephants began to stream into the area to escape intense poaching elsewhere.

By the 1990s, human and elephant populations were on a collision course. Elephants destroyed crops and farmers retaliated by killing the animals. There was a high level of poverty in the area because people lacked an alternative means of earning a livelihood, and there were shortages of food and water. In addition, there were few schools to help the young gain basic skills.

To resolve the situation, more than 200 families contributed land to the sanctuary, agreeing not to farm this

important elephant habitat. In return, they became shareholders in MES and began to receive annual dividends from tourism income.



MES is the first community-owned conservation enterprise dedicated to protecting elephants. The sanctuary minimizes conflicts among humans and wildlife, enhances the cultural and economic well-being of the community, upholds the highest standards of environmental protection and promotes the preservation of the rich culture of the Digo and Duruma. It offers visitors spectacular scenery and a unique range of flora and fauna. Visitors are assured of sighting an elephant.

The MES board of directors, in conjunction with the Born Free Foundation, developed a program to cover school fees for needy students, resulting in improved school enrolment and enhanced pupil performance in an area that once had the lowest levels of literacy in Kwale district.

As well, thanks to USAID efforts in promoting community-based participation in natural resources management, there is increased community appreciation of wildlife.

Some shareholders live nearby and help manage the sanctuary. Local people work as sanctuary guards and game scouts. MES also has enabled the community to build schools and enjoy a steady water supply and better road network.

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

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## Trafficked Children Return Home in Benin

This is the story of a woman who went from a career in child trafficking to championing women's rights.

She accomplished this by empowering women and girls in her community with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Community Action for Girls' Education (CAGE) project.

In 2001, USAID awarded World Learning, a U.S.-based nongovernmental organization (NGO), a four-year grant to promote girls' education in targeted communities in the areas of Bopa, Aplahoue, Ouinhi, Zagnanado, Banikoara, Karimama, Kerou and Boukoumbe in Benin. Tokpoê, a rural village in Bopa, approximately 95 kilometers from Cotonou, Benin's largest city, is one of those communities.

World Learning conducted community sensitization programs, including meetings in villages to raise awareness among parents, teachers and local authorities about the importance of education -- in particular girls' education -- and about the evils of child trafficking.

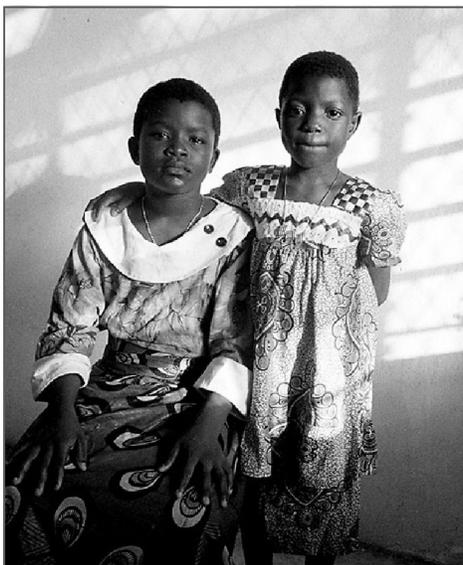
The NGO also established local monitoring committees to see that school-age girls enroll and stay in school. It offered students the opportunity to meet after classes to study.

Débora Houndessegan is a dynamic woman who for several years was an intermediary between trafficked children's parents and families offering to put the trafficked children to work for money.

For agreeing to have their child placed with another family, parents received the equivalent of approxi-

mately \$10 and a few yards of cloth.

The trafficked children usually ended up working long hours, in poor conditions, and sometimes



Sisters Pelagy (8) and Jocelyne (6) were trafficked separately from Benin to Gabon but ended up working for the same family. The family's children went to school, while the sisters handled household chores and worked outside the home to make money for their employer. Pelagy was beaten and sometimes tied up if she did not take in a daily quota. After seeing her younger sister also being beaten, Pelagy fled to the police taking Jocelyne with her; they were placed in a safe home before returning to Benin. (2001 Michael St. Maur Sheil/ckphoto.com)

were subjected to physical and sexual abuse. Usually a trafficked child is provided with minimum necessities -- a place to sleep and basic food. There is no monetary compensation. Once a child was taken away, parents knew little about the child's whereabouts.

With regular visits of two Bopa CAGE workers to the targeted communities and their sensitization ef-

forts, things began to change. Houndessegan, for one, realized she was not working toward the betterment of her community. She realized that by trafficking girls, she had contributed to increasing poverty among women. She felt guilty and went to the CAGE community workers to confess her trafficking activities.

Houndessegan promised to stop her business and committed herself to bringing back home the children she had sold. She became the village's main advocate for girls' schooling and an influential member of the local committee created to promote that goal.

Houndessegan maintained that girls could achieve as important positions as men if they were given the chance to attend school.

Other people in the community also became aware of the benefits of sending girls to school and renounced the practice of child trafficking.

Houndessegan brought girls she had trafficked back to Tokpoê, where the younger girls started school and the older girls became apprentices.

Houndessegan has used her business acumen to develop a women's collective that harvests and processes cassava, a staple food of Benin, and palm tree products, both of which are important commercially. She has been a major catalyst in changing the community of Tokpoê.

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

## United States Mourns Shooting Deaths at Virginia Tech

By Stephen Kaufman  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The shooting deaths of at least 30 individuals at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) April 16 was the worst such incident in U.S. history, causing grief and evoking expressions of condolence from across the country, as well as around the world.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said April 17 that the incident was "a terrible tragedy ... the likes of which we have not seen in this country ever before."

Across the United States, flags were flown at half-staff as a sign of mourning, and President Bush joined university and Virginia state leaders at a convocation held on the university's campus, located in the city of Blacksburg, Virginia.

In remarks April 16, shortly after the shootings, President Bush said educational institutions "should be places of safety and sanctuary and learning."

"When that sanctuary is violated, the impact is felt in every American classroom and every American community," Bush said.

Virginia Tech's president, Charles Steger, told the U.S. television network ABC April 17 that the university and its local community are in "a state of shock."

"We are focusing on, one, trying to get a complete investigation and, secondly, trying to work with the families of the students who've been lost," Steger said.

Virginia Tech, which is a Virginia state university, has 26,370 stu-

dents, of which 457 are international students, according to the school's official Web site.

McCormack said he expects the United States to remain a popular destination for foreign students despite the tragedy. "It is a good en-

A State Department official who asked not to be identified said the American people have been "deeply moved" by international expressions of sympathy and said the American people "grieve at the loss to the world in lives and potential."



Thousands of students attend a convocation at Virginia Tech University's Worsham Stadium in Blacksburg, Virginia. (AP Images)

vironment for students to explore boundaries of knowledge [and] contribute to a body of knowledge in their given area of study."

He said the events in Blacksburg were unique and that he expects foreign students will continue to study in the United States.

McCormack would not comment on whether any overseas students or faculty had been victims of the attack, deferring to Virginia Tech or law enforcement officials who are leading the investigation to make any official announcements on the tragedy and those involved.

The official added that international students and scholars "are valued members of our higher education communities in the United States" and that those involved in international exchange programs "work to ensure the safety and well-being of all students and employees, both international and American."

According to the official, during the 2006 fiscal year, the United States issued nearly 274,000 F visas, used for academic students, and more than 300,000 J visas, which are used for both exchange visitors and students. ♦

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## U.S. Balancing Needs of Refugees, Thwarting Terrorism

By Jeffrey Thomas  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington - The United States is working to ensure that its traditional refugee and asylum program is not affected adversely by the need to fight terrorism, according to government officials.

"We are deeply committed to ensuring that those who deserve humanitarian relief from our immigration system receive it, and that America continues to be a beacon of hope and protection for the persecuted," Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said in a January announcement that he planned to use discretionary authority to permit consideration of applications for refugee or asylum status for some groups that, under duress, might have provided assistance to terrorist organizations.

In 2005, some 54,000 refugees or asylum seekers were resettled in the United States, a larger number than in the rest of the world combined. More than 2.6 million refugees have been settled in the United States since 1975, according to the State Department. The United States is also the largest donor to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

But in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, the Congress passed legislation containing language that has created a challenge for the U.S. refugee program. President Bush currently is seeking a legislative change that would give back to the executive branch discretion it once had to deal with certain cases, said Kelly Ryan, deputy assistant secretary of state for population, refugees and migration, in April 11 remarks at the Heritage Foundation, a

Washington public policy research institution.

The two laws that have affected refugees and asylum seekers -- the USA Patriot Act and the Real ID Act of 2005 -- adopted a broad definition of what constitutes a "terrorist organization." They also include a broad definition of what constitutes "material support" to a terrorist organization, construing material support to include transportation, communications, funds or "other material financial benefit." Both terrorists and those who provide terrorists with "material support" are barred from entering the United States. The laws did not address the situation of those who might have provided such support under duress.

Refugee groups affected by the material support provision include Colombians, Burmese, Cubans and Chinese, according to Ryan. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has issued waivers for eight affected groups of refugees who might have provided material support under duress. In August 2006, for example, she issued a waiver unblocking thousands of Burma's ethnic Karen people, now living in refugee camps in Thailand, from applying for resettlement in the United States. In helping refugees and asylum seekers, the Department of State works with the departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services from the initial identification of the refugees until the time they are resettled in the United States. The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration funds the initial resettlement costs for each refugee for the first 120 days of his or her stay in the United States. After 120 days, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in Health and Human Services pays for a variety of services, in-

cluding medical assistance, skills training and social adjustment and aid for victims of torture. Chertoff on January 19 exercised his discretionary authority "to permit consideration of applications for refugee status, asylum or adjustment of status from some who have provided material support to groups while under duress."

He also waived the material support to terrorism provisions for those who provided support to eight groups identified by Secretary Rice: the Karen National Union and Karen National Liberation Army, Chin National Front and Chin National Army, Chin National League for Democracy, Kayan New Land Party, Arakan Liberation Party, Tibetan Mustangs, Cuban Alzados and Karenni National Progressive Party.

Speaking for Homeland Security at the Heritage Foundation, acting Assistant Secretary Paul Rosenzweig said President Bush also is seeking from Congress a waiver for those who took up arms as allies of the United States, in particular, the Hmong and Montagnards of Southeast Asia.

The president is seeking a legislative change that would restore to the executive branch the discretion it previously had to deal with refugees on a case-by-case basis, Ryan said. Language in the Immigration and Nationality Act includes some waiver or exemption authority, but this authority has been exercised only recently and might not be broad enough to cover all contingencies, according to Brian W. Walsh, a senior legal research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, who also participated in the program.

*(Continued on page 20)*

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## Muslim Women in America a Diverse Group, Scholar Says

By Louise Fenner  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – The diversity of Muslim women in America “is a testament” to the freedom of choice they are able to exercise in their religious observance, says Fatina Abdrabboh, a graduate student of Islamic studies and international security at Harvard University in Massachusetts.

Abdrabboh, who wears the hijab (traditional headscarf), said American culture allows everyone to be “who you want to be and whatever you want to be.”



Fatina Abdrabboh (Photo courtesy of Fatina Abdrabboh)

Speaking in a State Department-sponsored webchat April 16 with participants from the United States and 17 other countries, Abdrabboh said Muslim women vary widely in their background, religious expression and political beliefs.

“The diversity of Muslim women in American is a testament to the extent to which they have agency and choice in their religious observance,” said Abdrabboh.

“For the vast majority of Muslim women who wear hijabs in America, there does not appear to be any problems, both in the university and in the workforce,” she said, noting that women who wear the hijab are employed by the federal government, corporations “and every sector of the work force, from teachers to service providers.”

“In fact, many young Muslim women in America take pride in

their choice to cover their hair, and the freedom to express such a choice in this country,” she said. Abdrabboh, the head of the Muslim Student Organization at Harvard’s

John F. Kennedy School of Government, was born and raised in Dearborn, Michigan. In June 2006, she participated in a 10-day State Department-sponsored traveling speaker program in Niger to discuss her research on Islam and life as a Muslim woman in America.

She said there are some 2,000

mosques in the United States and a Muslim population estimated at 7 million to 9 million. They include immigrants from the Middle East, South Asia and elsewhere, their children and grandchildren, and African-American Muslims.

“These all contribute to the richness and complexity of the identity and psyche of the American Muslim woman,” Abdrabboh said.

She also cited the wide variety of U.S. Muslim women’s groups dealing with humanitarian issues, prevention of domestic violence, gender equality and other challenges. “Most important, there are a rising number of women-initiated and women-led federations,” Abdrabboh said.

“I think it’s crucial that Muslim women all over the world learn from other women’s struggles and combine efforts,” she added. Ab-

drabboh also stressed that “the struggle for women’s equality is not a Muslim thing” and that “gender justice is a principle that we should all strive to perfect.”

Many Americans are very interested in learning about “Islam in general, the Middle East, Arab and Muslim culture,” she said, “and [I] have managed to entertain this opportunity engaging everyone and anyone who is curious.”

According to Abdrabboh, there are advantages to being a Muslim woman in the United States, including the opportunity to answer the many “social, political and intellectual questions” that Americans have. Because the United States offers the opportunity for free expression, Muslim women have the ability to dispel myths and stereotypes, she said.

Abdrabboh also cited rising interest in Arabic classes at Harvard and other institutions. This includes various dialects “from Levantine Arabic to colloquial Egyptian Arabic” as well as modern standard Arabic and classical Arabic, she said.

A transcript ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Archive/2007/Apr/16-118990.html> ) of Abdrabboh’s webchat and information on upcoming webchats, including one with the publisher of *Azizah* magazine ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=April&x=20070413162614Inkai0.6512567> ), are available on USINFO’s Webchat Station ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Products/Webchats.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>)* ♦

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## U.S. Community Offers Help When Mosque Suffers Fire Damage

By Lauren Monsen  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- When the mosque serving the Islamic Society of Schuylkill County in Pennsylvania was damaged by fire April 11, Muslim families immediately were offered a space for prayer services by the Jewish community in the nearby town of Pottsville.

Although the Muslim congregation ultimately decided to hold services in a fire station that also offered space, the mosque's imam, Shiraz Mansoor, and the chairman of the Pennsylvania branch of the Council for American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), Iftekhar Hussain, both expressed gratitude for the Oheb Zedeck Synagogue's generosity. The fire station was chosen because its location is more convenient, Hussain said.

"This kind of interfaith cooperation is a concrete demonstration of the mutual support that results when American communities come together in times of crisis," Hussain told a USNewswire reporter.

CAIR is the United States' largest Islamic civil liberties group, with 32 offices and chapters nationwide and in Canada. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower U.S. Muslims and build coalitions that foster justice and mutual understanding.

In recent interviews with USINFO, Hussain and Mansoor explained that the Islamic Society was contacted by an administrator of the synagogue and the synagogue's rabbi with offers of assistance. The Islamic Society of Schuylkill County and the Oheb Zedeck Synagogue Center are the only mosque and synagogue in the Pottsville/Mechanicsville area (population 15,000-20,000).

Hussain and Mansoor said the Islamic and Jewish communities have established an ongoing partnership to help promote interfaith tolerance and understanding.

Under Mansoor's leadership, the mosque "has had a half a dozen interfaith visits and programs with the synagogue," said Hussain. Mansoor is also a member of the Pottsville Ministerium, an organization of local clergymen who get together once a month, and he served for a few years as vice president of the Unity Coalition. The Unity Coalition has "members from the Catholic, Lutheran, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and Jewish communities," according to Hussain.

The various congregations within Pottsville and Mechanicsville tend to be neighborly and supportive of one another, Mansoor observed. The Pottsville Ministerium "sponsors interfaith programs at Easter and Thanksgiving," he said.

Moreover, in his capacity as a Unity Coalition member, "I've been to churches to talk about Islam, to discuss religious similarities" among different faiths, "and to hold interfaith prayer gatherings."

Until the mosque is repaired, the Mechanicsville Firehouse will host Muslim worshipers for Friday noon congregational prayers. There are 35 Muslim families that belong to the Islamic Society of Schuylkill County, and so far there is no estimated date for when the mosque will re-open. However, mosque administrators currently are evaluating repair options, and say they hope the mosque will be usable before Ramadan starts in September, said Hussain.

Firefighters and state police have concluded that the mosque blaze was accidental. The Republican Herald reported that the mosque's main prayer area sustained smoke and water damage, with the majority of the fire damage confined to the kitchen/cafeteria area adjacent to the main building.

For more stories on U.S. society, see Population and Diversity ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history\\_geography\\_and\\_population/population\\_and\\_diversity.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/population_and_diversity.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>)* ♦

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## U.S. College's "Coexistence House" Promotes Religious Tolerance

By Carolee Walker  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Spring in the United States is often the time when university students get together with friends to submit their fall housing requests, hoping to share living spaces with people they know and who share compatible lifestyles. Not so for the 14 Muslim, Christian and Jewish women who have chosen to room together at the Middle East Coexistence House at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

By agreeing to live with each other, students also agree to accept each other regardless of their religious beliefs, Dalia Gheith, a Muslim and a freshman at Rutgers' all-female Douglass College, said in a USINFO webchat on April 4. "We try to understand each other's points of view and learn more about each other's backgrounds." Gheith and several other residents of the house participated in the hourlong webchat.

The Middle East Coexistence House is part of a growing grassroots effort on American campuses to bridge cultural gaps and embrace diversity, according to Danielle Josephs, a senior, who founded the house in 2005. Josephs' father is an Iraqi Jew and her Iraqi grandparents lived among Arab and Muslim neighbors. "I am determined, through this project, to help demystify misperceptions about Islam and Muslim women," said Josephs, who speaks Hebrew and is studying Arabic.

"There are 'ah-ha!' moments every day," Josephs said. "Every encounter broadens your knowledge base. For example, at the outset of the project, I was unaware that Muslim women could take off their hijab

[traditional headscarf] in the presence of other women. During the first week, when one of my residents took off her scarf, I practically ran the other way so as not to embarrass her." "Sometimes we see similarities among cultures and philosophies that one may not expect," said Samantha Shanni, a sophomore majoring in psychology and Middle Eastern studies, whose mother is Christian and father is Jewish.

"I was used to dealing with other religions because half of my family is also Jewish. But I do find that when talking about Christianity in American society a lot of people only talk about the evangelicals or extremely conservative Christians in the government. It is similar to the way people can stereotype Muslims as one certain thing. The more knowledgeable on the religion you are the less this happens," Shanni said.

For Muslims to live in peace with non-Muslims in the United States, Gheith said, Muslims themselves must "have a good understanding of the tolerance of which our faith speaks and which it promotes. Consequently, we will become more open and accept dealing with and living amongst people of different faiths."

"I ... believe in the power of American Muslims in the Arab world," said Sara Elnakib, a Muslim and a senior studying nutritional sciences who was born in Egypt. "I personally am planning to go back to Egypt to live there after I graduate and hopefully somehow change health care in the Middle East."

Because Coexistence House residents are beginning to understand how to bridge religious differences,

Gheith said, the students try to promote the message of coexistence on campus and outside school. Few pressing issues of the day, including environmental problems, poverty and security can be solved without working together as a global community, according to Josephs. "There are many inspiring examples of Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East collaborating on environmental projects in the region. These gigantic problems will only be solved if we put our minds together and commit to work as a team."

Ultimately, it might be easier for women of different faiths to cooperate with each other than it would be for men, observed Josephs, who encourages women's involvement in international conflict resolution and negotiation.

"In collaboration with men and existing leaders, I think that women can make a significant change in the [Middle East] region," she added.

The transcript and information on upcoming webchats are available on USINFO's Webchat Station (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Products/Webchats.html>).

For more information on U.S. society, see Population and Diversity ([http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history\\_geography\\_and\\_population\\_population\\_and\\_diversity.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population_population_and_diversity.html)) and International Religious Freedom ([http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/human\\_rights/intl\\_religious\\_freedom.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/human_rights/intl_religious_freedom.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>)* ♦

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## Iranian Photography Exhibit Shows Americans a Personal Iran

By Elizabeth Kelleher  
USINFO Staff Writer

College Park, Maryland -- The first major exhibition of contemporary Iranian photography in the United States emphasizes the interior life of individuals and families in Iran over journalism or documentary-type photography.

Co-curators Hamid Severi, of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Iran, and Gary Hallman, of the Regis Center for Art at the University of Minnesota, chose photos to show American audiences that, although Iran is awash in photojournalism, its photographers also have a modern, artistic sensibility, Hallman told USINFO. Persian Visions: Contemporary Photography From Iran travels to museums in 11 cities through 2009.

Hallman said the photographers in Persian Visions represent an "attitude" that photography is "a way to represent an idea, rather than show you what something looks like." He said the work measures up to the most poetic photography being exhibited worldwide, which increasingly is done by "interlopers," sculptors or artists who have no concern about photographic traditions.

Hallman said he was surprised when he visited Tehran to prepare the exhibit. "It was not just looking at portfolios. I met the artists, went to their studios," he said. He said some of the artists talked of problems with limitations due to politics. But Hallman said that, since the cultural revolution of 1979, artists have looked inward and developed a "new Iranian aesthetic."

Birds, universal in art as a symbol of freedom and consistently present

in Iranian tapestries and literature, are depicted in many of the photos. Ebrahim Khadem Bayat's untitled photo of a bird on a chair draped with netting creates an effect that Hallman describes as "beautiful ... and mysterious."



In Koroush Adim's "Revelations2" the chador is patterned and associated with personal space. (Photo University of Maryland Art Gallery)

In the catalog for the exhibit, Robert Silberman, art history professor at the University of Minnesota, calls the Bayat photo a play on presence and absence.

While some symbols are universal, the exhibit includes works that are "coded with secret cultural cues that insiders know, and outsiders don't," Hallman said. Many photos include fish, which in Iranian culture represent "good luck, life or optimism," according to the co-curator.

In Mehran Mohajer's T.V. Series 1 (The Light Is Out The Room Is Dark), television images are reduced

to eerie light due to a newspaper placed over them. Silberman says Iranian television is "government controlled and therefore relatively conservative, while many of the newspapers are liberal, but the contrast is not necessarily political." In some photos in Mohajer's T.V. series, the overlaid text is from a photography book or a mosque wall. "The writing is poetic, not dogmatic," Silberman says.

The exhibit includes war photos, including heroic portraits from the Iran-Iraq War of men with swords and guns. The war photos by Kaveh Golestan, a photojournalist for the BBC who was killed in 2003 in Iraq, are washed with color in a way that beautifies them, "but makes them more painful," Hallman said.

Of the 20 celebrated Iranian photographers in the show, two are women, and several of the photos depict women in veils. In most, the chador is used to evoke pictorial mystery, rather than express an opinion about gender roles, Hallman said.

The exhibit has been well received in the United States, according to David Furchgott, president of International Arts & Artists, a U.S. non-profit organization that is coordinating the tour.

The show's genesis was a 1998 visit to the University of Minnesota by Iranian filmmakers who asked to meet Hallman, a professor of photography, to talk about American photography. That meeting, scheduled to last 20 minutes, resulted in several dinners and two trips by Hallman to Iran to visit with experts at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. ♦

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## Tribute to Baseball Great Jackie Robinson Benefits Charities

By Carolee Walker  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – When U.S. Major League Baseball (MLB) teams take the field April 15, 25 teams will have one player wearing the number 42 and five teams will have each of its players wearing number 42 -- all in tribute to Jackie Robinson, who six decades ago broke baseball's "color barrier" while wearing that number.

A baseball Hall of Fame member, Robinson was the first black player in the U.S. major leagues when he took the field for New York's Brooklyn Dodgers (the team moved to Los Angeles before the 1958 season) on April 15, 1947. To commemorate the 60th anniversary of Robinson's baseball debut, the jerseys will be worn April 15 and later will be auctioned to the highest bidders. Proceeds will benefit the Jackie Robinson Foundation.

Robinson's number was "retired" permanently – meaning no player again will wear that number – in 1997 to mark the 50th anniversary of Robinson's breakthrough. The commissioner of baseball "unretired" the number for the April 15, 2007, anniversary.

One active player – New York Yan-

kee pitcher Mariano Rivera – has worn the number 42 since he joined the team in 1995. Rivera, a native of Panama, was among a handful of players "grandfathered in" – allowed to keep wearing the 42 --



Jackie Robinson in 1948. Today Robinson is a hero to generations of players.  
(File photo AP Images)

when the number was retired. Now, he is the only remaining active player who still wears the number.

"As a minority, I feel honored wearing number 42 and carrying the legacy that Jackie Robinson left," Rivera said on Major League Baseball's Web site. "I wear it with good pride. That's the way it goes. All the guys retired or left, and I'm still carrying the number. I feel blessed for that."

"Obviously, Jackie was a player who changed the game," said Luis Gonzalez, a first-year Dodger, on MLB's Web site. "The stuff that he had to go through opened the door for all minorities to be able to play this game."

Major League Baseball began in 1903 and today has 30 teams in all. Today, 9 percent of the players are black; 27 percent are foreign born.

The Jackie Robinson Foundation, which provides mentoring and scholarships to outstanding black and Hispanic students, is headed by Robinson's widow, Rachel Robinson, who founded the charitable organization after her husband's death at the age of 53 in 1972.

More information ( <http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/events/jrd/index.jsp> ) on the April 15 commemoration is available on MLB's 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>)* ♦

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## United States Emphasizes Importance of Protecting Press Freedom

By Eric Green  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- In recognition of World Press Freedom Day on May 3, the United States is emphasizing the importance of protecting press freedom.

The State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor said in a statement supplied to USINFO April 13 that "supporting press freedom is an integral part of our efforts to promote human rights and democracy worldwide."

The bureau said the State Department provides training for journalists, editors and media managers from countries worldwide, supports professional exchanges and civic education programs and provides assistance for the production of radio and television programs that are independent of state-controlled media. The bureau added that the State Department "speaks out when press freedoms are under siege."

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said April 10 that "there is no more important pillar of democracy than a free and active press."

Rice said a free press allows for an open exchange of views between citizens and their leaders. The secretary said that in countries "where people do not yet enjoy the benefits of freedom, it is often journalists who make the sacrifice and endure the danger to try and report to the outside world so that those places can be free."

### NEW OAS REPORT

A new report by Ignacio Álvarez of

the Organization of American States (OAS) says the right to freedom of expression has advanced in the Western Hemisphere, "especially as a result of the transitions to democracy."



Secretary Rice addresses the Edward R. Murrow Journalism Participants at the State Department April 10. REUTERS/Molly Riley

But Álvarez, the OAS special rapporteur for freedom of expression, added in the April 9 report that "the obstructions of freedom of expression seen in 2006 are genuinely a cause for concern."

Álvarez said 19 journalists in the Americas were murdered in 2006 for "reasons that could be connected with the exercise of freedom of expression." Those murders, he said, mark an increase from the previous three years in the number of killings of journalists.

Eric Watnik, a spokesman for the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, told

USINFO April 10 that the OAS report "clearly indicates" that press freedom in the Americas "has gained ground as a result of democratic consolidation throughout the region."

Watnik added, however, that "in order to address the continuing obstructions of freedom of expression noted in the report, we as OAS member states must make appropriate efforts to ensure a safe and non-violent environment for the free flow of ideas and public discourse throughout the [Western] Hemisphere. In this way, we can work to protect and strengthen our shared commitment to the right of freedom of expression."

The OAS report also said more than 200 instances of assaults and threats were made in the Americas against "communicators" in 2006. Álvarez said these incidents frequently are not investigated.

The report precedes commemoration of the 17th annual World Press Freedom Day, which stresses the need to defend the media from attacks on its independence, and pays tribute to journalists who have lost their lives while performing their jobs. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/May/01-313893.html> ).)

U.N. official Koichiro Matsuura said in a statement that violence against media professionals is one of the "greatest threats" to free expression. As such, World Press Freedom Day 2007 is being dedicated to the theme of journalist safety, said Matsuura, director-general of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Matsuura said 2006 was the

*(Continued on page 20)*

# Egypt, United States Work Together To Reduce Traffic Deaths

By Jane Morse  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Great philosophers are not thought to be covered with pink or purple fur -- but never underestimate the wisdom offered by Muppets.

Those lovable creatures who populate the children's show Sesame Street are teaching children in many parts of the world important life skills, and nowhere is this more true than in Egypt.

Alam Simsin -- as Sesame Street is called in Arabic -- has incorporated a prominent traffic safety component into its programming. Long before they ever get their hands on a steering wheel, children are learning about general traffic rules, the safe use of automobiles and the importance of using seat belts. Muppets also emphasize skills for pedestrians, such as the proper and safe ways of crossing the street.

In 1998, The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Egyptian Ministry of Education agreed to fund the program under their bilateral agreement. It aired on Egyptian television beginning in August 2000.

Since its first airing, Alam Simsin, which USAID continues to fund, has become a factor in the lives of the majority of Egyptian households, reaching more than 95 percent of potential viewers in six years. Each episode of the show is based on a set of educational goals set by a panel of Egyptian experts

in language, child psychology, and early childhood education and development.

In addition to the traffic safety segments inside the episodes, five public service announcements (PSAs) were produced that were aired independently to reach viewers during peak viewership times.



Alam Simsin (Arabic for Sesame Street) educates Egyptian children on road safety and other life lessons. (AP Images)

Additionally, 42,000 mothers and caregivers received training on the road safety component of the Alam Simsin Parental Outreach Program. Parents and child care providers received road safety material to share with their families across seven governorates in Egypt.

## ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), road safety is a neglected but growing public health and development issue. Each year worldwide, nearly 1.2 million people are killed in road accidents and millions more are injured or disabled, WHO statistics show. In Egypt, yearly road deaths number 6,000, with 26,000 injured.

WHO estimates that 85 percent of

traffic deaths and injuries occur in low-income and middle-income countries. The costs are enormous -- between \$64.5 billion and \$100 billion worldwide.

The goal is to raise awareness about the societal impact of road traffic deaths and injuries and to promote injury prevention measures, such as wearing helmets, using seat belts, preventing drunk driving and speeding, and improving infrastructure.

In Egypt, the Cairo Automobile Club is assuming a leadership role with representatives from the Egyptian government, the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, the Safe Road Society, local chapters of Rotary International (Rotary clubs) and the World Health Organization to plan events to emphasize road safety.

The hope is that partnerships forged during activities for the Road Safety Week in Egypt will help launch a sustainable multi-sector national initiative to cut traffic injuries over the next year.

## PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Public-private cooperation for road safety initiatives is active on many levels in Egypt. The U.S. Embassy in Cairo, for example, supports Rotary club efforts in Egypt by ensuring that the organization's road safety programs get media attention and coverage. The Rotary Club, a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders, has provided a platform for speakers promoting traffic safety.

In May 2006, USAID approved

*(Continued on page 19)*

## Developing Nations Can Influence Global Trade Talks, USTR Says

By Susan Krause  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Developing countries have an opportunity to play a significant leadership role in the Doha round, the current multilateral trade talks being conducted under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO), says U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Susan Schwab.

Schwab was in India April 12 for meetings of trade ministers from key WTO member nations. Ministers from Brazil, India, the European Union, and the United States -- together referred to as the "Group of Four" or G-4 -- met first. They were to be joined later by representatives from Australia and Japan, rounding out the so-called "Group of Six."

Schwab told reporters that the G-4 exists "because Brazil and India have a place at the table that is equal to the U.S. and EU."

Expanding trade between developed industrial countries and developing countries will not fulfill the promise of the Doha Development Agenda framework agreement, Schwab said. Rather, she said, trade must increase among developing countries to generate global economic development and alleviate poverty.

High tariffs imposed by developing countries have thwarted that goal, Schwab said. She pointed out that the United States and the European Union have average agricultural tariffs of 12 percent and 24 percent, respectively, but the average global tariff for agricultural products is 62 percent, mostly because of the high

tariffs of developing countries.

"North-South trade clearly is fundamental to the Doha round," Schwab said. "But South-South trade is also an important component to the



U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, right, shakes hand with Indian Commerce and Trade Minister Kamal Nath at an interactive session on 'Indo-US Trade and Investment (AP Photo)

Doha round. And there you get to the question, what obligation if any does India or Brazil or China feel for other developing countries?"

Schwab urged the more advanced developing countries to recognize and take advantage of the opportunities available to them in the trade talks.

"It's a new world in terms of trade negotiations and it's very exciting," she said. Developing countries no longer must wait on the sidelines for the developed countries to "cut a deal among themselves," she said.

But the leadership opportunities come with obligations as well, she said, urging advanced developing countries to "lead by example."

Schwab said the United States has "made it very clear that we are prepared to undertake serious cuts in our trade-distorting domestic support in the context of a ... successful Doha agreement that includes significant new market access."

She said she thought the trade ministers had brought a "sense of momentum" to the G-4 meeting, the first formal gathering of the group in several months.

"My colleagues and I arrived here with a positive attitude and a desire to really make some progress," she said. But, she cautioned, "We are not expecting a breakthrough here, because this is really a stock-taking meeting."

Nonetheless, Schwab said she hoped the gatherings also would reflect an increased "sense of urgency" about moving ahead with the trade talks.

For additional information, see USA and the WTO ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic\\_issues/WTO.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/WTO.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>)* ♦

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## Treasury Chief Says IMF Must “Re-Invent Itself” To Stay Relevant

By Ralph Dannheisser  
USINFO Special Correspondent

Washington -- U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson has expanded his call for far-reaching reform of International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies and procedures, most critically in the area of foreign exchange surveillance.

"For the IMF to remain modern and relevant, it must re-invent itself," he said in a statement delivered in Washington April 14 at the spring meeting of the IMF and World Bank.

The Treasury chief urged adoption of rule changes that would enable the IMF to monitor and deal with countries' currency manipulations.

"For us, reform of the IMF's foreign exchange surveillance is the linchpin on which other reforms depend, and we look forward to action in this important area very soon after these meetings," Paulson said. He said that, beyond implementation of needed policy changes, "IMF staff must do a better job in addressing foreign exchange surveillance on a day-to-day basis."

The secretary called for "greater exchange rate flexibility in Asian emerging economies," singling out in particular China, whose exchange rate policies have helped produce massive trade surpluses with the United States and the rest of the world. "The counterpart to a falling U.S. trade deficit, by definition, is falling trade surpluses in other economies," he observed.

Paulson had addressed the same issue more briefly in a statement he issued April 13, just after a meeting of the Group of Seven (G7) finance ministers and central bankers that preceded the semiannual IMF-World

Bank gathering. While stressing the exchange rate issue, Paulson said the IMF's modernization process also must involve a complete overhaul of its structure of governance, with a greater role for developing nations.

"The Fund no longer looks like the world economy in which we live," the secretary said, and "marginal reforms that do not fundamentally alter relative quota shares are insufficient -- bold action is needed to boost the share of dynamic emerging market countries."

Paulson's weekend push for IMF reform had been foreshadowed by comments made to reporters April 12 by Treasury Under Secretary Timothy Adams. "We are reaching a critical time on reform of the IMF," Adams said, adding it was needed to safeguard the institution's "relevance and legitimacy." He also focused attention on China, saying that it must adopt a more flexible currency to sustain its own growth and that of the global economy.

### BENEFITS OF FREE TRADE

Speaking before the World Bank's development committee April 15, Paulson stressed the importance -- to poorer nations as well as to the developed world -- of successfully completing global free trade talks.

"The best way to alleviate poverty and raise living standards is through greater openness, so more people can benefit from the expanding global economy," he said in prepared remarks.

He observed that developing countries that had opened to trade had seen sharp reductions in poverty, citing notable growth in several

Asian economies and in Mexico.

"We look forward to working closely with all our partners to achieve our common goal: to create the conditions and opportunities for the world's poor to improve their livelihoods and overcome poverty," Paulson said.

The Treasury chief stressed the need to "continue pushing forward on the trade agenda, including a successful Doha Round of negotiations, to keep all our economies growing." He termed the case for trade liberalization "clear and compelling," adding, "If we want more people to support it, we need to ease anxieties and help more people realize the benefits of trade."

### HELP FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Turning to the problems of sub-Saharan Africa, Paulson said U.S. officials are heartened by early indications that the World Bank's Africa Action Plan (AAP) is having success. "It is too early to determine the long-term effectiveness of the AAP, but there is sufficient evidence that results are moving in the right direction," he said.

He called for a shift in the plan, toward a greater focus on private sector support and "improving financial sector access."

"It is the financial sector that provides a loan to start an enterprise, grow a business, or buy a house. Access to capital helps people acquire assets that give them a foothold in the economy -- personal financial wherewithal they can leverage into greater prosperity and economic security," he said. ♦

## Treasury's Paulson Says More Work Needed on Trade Imbalances

By Ralph Dannheisser  
USINFO Special Correspondent

Washington – U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson says the Group of Seven (G7) nations -- the world's major industrialized democracies -- have made progress toward reducing global trade imbalances, but that "more needs to be done."

Paulson gave his generally upbeat assessment of the world economy, including a healthy U.S. economy that is "making a transition to a sustainable expansion," in a statement following an April 13 meeting here with finance ministers and central bank governors from Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and Japan.

Citing the need for "strong domestic demand in major economies such as Japan and Europe," Paulson also stressed the role that China and oil exporting nations must play in redressing the imbalances that still adversely affect the global trade picture.

"Greater exchange rate flexibility and stronger domestic demand in China are critical parts of rebalancing, and it is crucial that China move now with greater urgency," Paulson said. And, he added, "Oil exporters also need to undertake measures to increase investment and consumption." Paulson reported that he and his fellow finance chiefs had held serious discussions on how to proceed at what he termed "a critical juncture for progress" in the World Trade Organization's ongoing Doha Development Round of trade negotiations.

"Substantial progress on services, including financial services, must be [an] integral part of a development round, so finance ministries need to work together to reinvigorate the financial services negotiations," he said. "Progress must be based on a substantive break-through."



Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson talks with reporters about the G7 economic summit during a news conference Friday, April 13, 2007 in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Notwithstanding the "positive backdrop" provided by the current global expansion, Paulson noted, "we remain aware of risks to the world economy." Those risks, he said, include high and volatile fuel prices, rising protectionist pressures, and the vulnerability of global financial markets to reversals of the sort experienced earlier in the year. Still, he said, "the system has proved to be resilient and adjustments orderly" in the wake of those reversals.

Paulson cited a need for reforms in the structure of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and improvements in its exchange rate surveillance procedures, declaring that G7 members, as major shareholders,

"must make the IMF look more like the world economy in which it operates."

He said it was essential to "be bold and follow through with fundamental reform of IMF quotas," adding that he thinks "there is a path forward that could achieve this objective, but doing so will require a rededication by many countries to the understanding that a strong IMF benefits us all."

Paulson cited the need for continuing efforts to promote development in low-income countries, "especially ways to address debt sustainability concerns." He said the development of responsible lending policies and practices remains central to this effort, and he called on creditor nations to incorporate the IMF/World Bank Joint Debt Sustainability Framework into their lending practices.

The secretary reported that the finance chiefs had reaffirmed their commitment to combating money laundering, terrorist financing, and similar threats to the stability and integrity of the international financial system.

And Paulson reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to "improving energy security and tackling the important issue of climate change," saying he had urged his G7 colleagues "to explore creative policies to address these issues that will engage developing countries." He cited the need to speed up use of low-carbon energy technologies. "Solving climate change is fundamentally a technology challenge, so we must consider how best to achieve this goal," Paulson said. ♦

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## U.S. Seeks Boost in Monetary Fund Currency Market Surveillance

By Kathryn McConnell  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) needs to boost its surveillance of currency markets and better adapt to the increase of dynamic, emerging economies, says Treasury Under Secretary Timothy Adams.

"We are reaching a critical time on reform of the IMF," Adams told reporters April 12. Reform is needed, he said, to safeguard the institution's "relevance and legitimacy."

Adams spoke the day before a meeting in Washington of the top finance officials of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom. The meeting of the Group of Seven (G7) finance ministers and central bankers precedes the annual joint spring meetings of the IMF and World Bank.

Adams said the IMF "has a unique and serious responsibility for exchange rate surveillance" and should play a stronger role in ensuring that countries do not manipulate

the values of their currencies.

The meeting of G7 finance chiefs will include an outreach session with officials from China, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to discuss investment flows from Asia and oil-producing countries, Adams said.



Treasury Under Secretary  
Timothy Adams

On April 16, U.S. Treasury officials will meet with Chinese finance officials to discuss macroeconomic and financial issues in the two countries, Adams said. That meeting will precede a meeting scheduled for May in China of the U.S.-China Strategic Economic Dialogue.

Adams said China needs to rebalance its economy and adopt a more flexible currency to sustain its growth.

"Creating an efficient and competitive financial sector is a key component of this rebalancing and is critical to ensuring future growth in China as well as the global econ-

omy," he said.

The finance leaders also plan to discuss global imbalances in their meeting and in a meeting of the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) April 14.

Additionally, they will discuss debt sustainability in low-income countries, development progress in Africa, and efforts to counter illicit financing and to promote the "stability and integrity" of the global financial system, Adams said.

He said, the G7 and IMFC will urge other countries to "reinvigorate" the Doha Development Round of global trade negotiations, especially in the area of financial services, which are critical to facilitating economic development.

The IMFC of 24 member countries advises the IMF board of directors.

The finance ministers also will discuss guidelines for creditors, managers of private pools of capital, investors, financial regulators and other market participants to help them address issues associated with the growth and dynamism of hedge funds, Adams said.

The IMF-World Bank meetings run through April 15. ♦

## Egypt, United States Work Together To Reduce Traffic Deaths . . .

*(Continued from page 15)*

\$73,859 for a project with Egypt's Safe Road Society to develop in Arabic educational Internet-based games and other material aimed at teaching children about traffic safety. The Safe Road Society is the only nongovernmental organization in Egypt dedicated solely to

traffic safety. So far, two of three traffic safety computer games have been completed and will be tested soon.

Most recently, the U.S. Embassy in Cairo approved the nominations of two engineers from the Egyptian Ministry of Transportation to participate in the U.S. International Visitor

Leadership Program. During their roughly monthlong stay in the United States, the Egyptian engineers will meet experts at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the National Transportation Safety Board and traffic safety nongovernmental organizations. ♦

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## U.S. Balancing Needs of Refugees, . . .

*(Continued from page 8)*

Both Rosenzweig and Ryan said the United States is seeking to ensure balance between the needs of legitimate refugees and asylum seekers and the demands for increased security. Rosenzweig said he shared Ryan's "frustration and regret this process has not moved as quickly as we would have liked."

Ryan said the State Department had the money and authority to admit up to 70,000 refugees and asylum seekers in 2006 but was able to admit only approximately 50,000. "We don't have the full discretion we would like to have," she said.

For 2007, the State Department has the authority to admit 70,000 and the funding for 60,000 refugees and asylum seekers; it hopes to admit 60,000. There is "strong bipartisan support for the refugee program," Ryan said.

Final determinations on all applications under the Refugee Admissions

Program are the responsibility of the Department of Homeland Security.

A video link ( <http://multimedia.heritage.org/content/wm/Lehrman-041107a.vvx> ) to the Heritage Foundation presentation is available on the foundation's Web site. The full text ( [http://www.dhs.gov/xnews/releases/pr\\_1169465766808.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/xnews/releases/pr_1169465766808.shtm) ) of Chertoff's January announcement is available on the Department of Homeland Security Web site.

For more information on U.S. policy, see Humanitarian Assistance and Refugees ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global\\_issues/refugees.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/refugees.html) ), Response to Terrorism ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international\\_security/terrorism.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/terrorism.html) ). A fact sheet ( <http://www.state.gov/g/prm/rls/fs/82822.htm> ) on the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is available on the State Department 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>)* ♦

## United States Emphasizes Importance of Protecting Press Freedom . . .

*(Continued from page 14)*

"bloodiest year on record" for journalists worldwide, with more than 150 media member killings. He added that hundreds more media workers were arrested, threatened or attacked because of their work.

"Being a journalist has never been more dangerous," said Matsuura.

He indicated that far too often, no one is brought to justice for murdering journalists.

### CONFERENCE IN COLOMBIA

On that theme of protecting media workers, UNESCO is sponsoring a May 3-4 conference in Medellin, Colombia, entitled "Press Freedom, Safety of Journalists and Impunity."

Participants at the Medellin conference will include reporters and editors from around the world, representatives from global press advocacy groups, the German-based Transparency International organization, the OAS special rapporteur, Ignacio Álvarez; and Colombian Vice President Francisco Santos Calderon.

During the conference, UNESCO will award its 2007 World Press Freedom Prize to the late Russian journalist, Anna Politkovskaya. She was killed in the entrance to her home in Moscow in October 2006.

President Bush said in a statement following Politkovskaya's murder that the journalist's efforts "to shine a light on human rights

abuses and corruption ... challenged her fellow Russians and, indeed, all of us to summon the courage and will, as individuals and societies, to struggle against evil and rectify injustices." (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=October&x=20061008105438attocnich0.7407953> ).

News reports described Politkovskaya as an unsparing critic of Russian authorities, who drew both death threats and high praise for her unflinching coverage of the war in Chechnya and ethnic-based conflicts throughout the North Caucasus.

The full text ( <http://www.cidh.oas.org/Relatoria/showarticle.asp?artID=692&IID=1> ) of the OAS report is available on the organization's Web site. ♦