



# Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

## INSIDE

### American and Ethiopian Partners Celebrate Completion of New Facilities at Abiot Ermeja Primary School

[U.S. Embassy, Addis Ababa] – American and Ethiopian partners celebrated the completion of the Abiot Ermeja primary school as a symbol of strong cooperation between the two countries. At the dedication ceremony, U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia Donald Yamamoto stressed the U.S. government's commitment to a secure, stable and prosperous Ethiopia. Deputy Commander of the U.S. Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of



Brig. General Holman (2nd from the left), Ambassador Yamamoto (3rd from the right) and Addis Ababa Education Officials cut the ribbon of new facilities at Abiot Ermeja Primary School

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### Thanksgiving Prompts Americans To Help Their Communities

By Louise Fenner  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- On Thanksgiving Day, when most Americans enjoy a holiday meal with friends and family and give thanks for the good things in their lives, many also take time to prepare and serve meals to the needy. Others donate to food drives, work at food warehouses or deliver groceries to soup kitchens, churches and other charitable groups.

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President George W. Bush stands over May, the 2007 National Thanksgiving Turkey, as the turkey becomes the center of focus for the White House media during the Pardoning of the National Thanksgiving Turkey Tuesday, Nov. 20, 2007, in the Rose Garden of the White House. White House photo by Joyce N. Boghosian

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## Trio Chicago and Friends Performs American Music in Addis Ababa and Gondar

Trio Chicago and Friends, an American music ensemble which specializes in American music by composers such as George Gershwin, Duke Ellington and others, performed in Addis Ababa and Gondar on November 15, 16 and 17. The group, which consists of a violin, viola, flute, piano and a soprano, performed at the Addis Ababa Municipality Theater Hall in a concert sponsored in collaboration with the Addis Ababa Municipal Secretariat Office to a standing room only crowd. Many students attended the concert. The Ethiopian String Group of the National Theater also performed classical Ethiopian music. Together the two groups played Ezra Minuet.

Trio Chicago and Friends also performed to over 600 enthusiastic students at Gondar University



*Trio Chicago and Friends performing to over 600 enthusiastic students at Gondar University*

and at Fasilades Palace Complex in Gondar. In collaboration with the Gondar Millennium Secretariat and with the cooperation of the Amhara Region Bureau of Culture and Tourism, Trio Chicago and Friends performed with the Gondar Zone Folkloric Ensemble at the palace. The performances were recorded for broadcast on radio and television as well.



*Trio Chicago and Friends in front of Fasiladas Palace*

Trio Chicago and Friends have performed in over 18 countries and have visited Ethiopia four times. In 2003 they performed at the National Palace at the invitation of President Girma. Group members remarked that Fasiladas Castle was the most picturesque place they have ever performed.

The U.S. Mission to Ethiopia was pleased to present Trio Chicago and Friends to Ethiopian audiences as its contribution of American culture to the celebration of the Ethiopian Millennium.♦

## Trio Chicago and Friends master musicians give master classes to Yared School of Music students.

Elliott Golub, violinist, and Marlou Johnston, viola player, presented a master class to students of violin and viola at Yared School of Music on November 19. Over 14 students received personal instruction from the master musicians. Elliott Golub, one of Chicago's most distinguished musicians, and Marlou Johnston, concertmaster and soloist with Kankakee Symphony Orchestra, are co-founders of the music ensemble, Trio Chicago and Friends. This music group has been making annual tours to remote parts of the globe as cultural ambassadors of the United States since 1996. This is their fourth visit to Ethiopia, and each time they have provided master classes to Yared School of Music students.♦



*Elliott Golub instructs Yared 2nd year student Matiyas Girma*

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## American and Ethiopian Partners Celebrate Completion of New Facilities . . .

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Africa (CJTF-HOA) Brigadier General Sanford Holman came to Addis Ababa from Djibouti to celebrate the school's dedication. He said, "This school is a demonstration of the American people's faith in the people of Ethiopia, an investment in the lives and future of our friends here in Addis Ababa."

Working with USAID-Ethiopia and the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa, two Naval Marine Construction Battalion detachments upgraded facilities at the Abiot Ermeja primary school, as requested by the local community and approved by the Addis Ababa Bureau of Education. Over ten months, civilian and military partners worked together to construct new walls and roofing for school buildings, build a new li-

brary, and install new sanitation facilities and drainage systems. The USAID Program Office provided furniture for the new buildings and coordinated sanitation training for teachers and students.

The new school facilities will benefit 1200 Ethiopian students, improving their education environment and sanitary conditions. Nancy Estes, USAID-Ethiopia Program Office Chief, emphasized, "We want all Ethiopian students to learn in an environment that helps them be the best students they can be. We are proud to work together – with the leadership of the Ministry of Education – to help you achieve your goals as teachers and students."

Contributions from the Principal Woizero Kebebus Mekonnen and the rest of the Abiot Ermeja Primary

School, as well as other local community leaders, were vitally important to the completion of this project.

The Abiot Ermeja Primary School project underscores the United States Government commitment to supporting local communities in their own efforts to improve the lives and futures of their citizens. As Brigadier General Holman noted in his remarks today, "All we did was build a few walls and a roof or two. These walls can't teach the children of Addis Ababa. It is the educators of today who hold the responsibility for shaping the leaders of tomorrow and the future of Ethiopia, and it is an opportunity for this community to make this project a true success."♦

## Thanksgiving Prompts Americans To Help Their . . .

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"As we count our many blessings, I encourage all Americans to show their thanks by giving back," President Bush said November 19 during a speech at Berkeley Plantation in Virginia, where in 1619 English settlers offered up thanks for their safe passage across the Atlantic.

Bush took note of Berkeley Plantation's claim to be the site of America's first Thanksgiving, but he added -- to laughter from the crowd -- that "this version of events is not very popular up north." Both the Berkeley Plantation and the Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts lay

claim to the first official Thanksgiving.

"I've come to honor Berkeley's history -- and to continue the great American tradition of giving thanks," the president said diplomatically.

Earlier in the day, Bush spent time helping volunteers pack boxes of groceries at the Central Virginia Foodbank in Richmond, Virginia. The food bank provides donated food to more than 500 charitable agencies in central Virginia that prepare thousands of meals for the poor each day.

At Thanksgiving, which is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November, as well as during the rest of the holiday season, many Americans make a special effort to volunteer at shelters, churches, food banks and other charitable organizations.

For example, in Santa Monica, California, people donate uncooked turkeys or volunteer their ovens to roast a turkey the night before Thanksgiving. In 2006, some 300 turkeys were transformed into more than 2,100 hot meals for the needy and distributed at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. Blankets and

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## Thanksgiving Prompts Americans To Help Their . . .

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clothing also were distributed, and free haircuts were available for people who wanted them.

In St. Mary's County, Maryland, the local government has sponsored a charity golf day on Thanksgiving for the past seven years, when golfers donate bags of nonperishable food and household items for a local food bank. In 2006, more than 2,000 items were collected.

And The Woodlands High School basketball teams in The Woodlands, Texas, are holding a pre-Thanksgiving food drive where the teams compete to see who can bring in the most food, according to the Houston Chronicle.

Peggy Grimes, executive director of the Montana Food Bank Network in Missoula, Montana, which provides food to 189 charitable agencies throughout the state, says volunteers and food donations especially are needed during Thanksgiving and the rest of the holiday season.

The food bank will distribute 20 percent more food this holiday season than in 2006 -- in part because the rising cost of gasoline eats away at people's disposable income, Grimes said. "We're seeing more people coming through the emergency food system, especially with this hike in gas prices."

"The amount of food going out this year is just amazing," she told US-INFO. "Our donations for the holiday season are up as well. Normally, we might get a few hundred turkeys, and this year we've already gotten 400."

The Montana Food Bank Network is partner of America's Second Harvest, the nation's largest charitable hunger relief organization. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfileenglish&y=2006&m=December&x=20061222131405xlreenef0.6872827>).

Each day, about 20 to 25 volunteers work in the Montana food bank. "We have a huge group of college students coming tomorrow to help us sort food and get our orders ready," Grimes said. Secondary school and grade school students often help too, she added, as well as senior citizens, church groups and individuals.

People who want to actually serve meals or distribute food baskets are directed to charitable groups that do that, Grimes said. For a soup kitchen that is serving a big meal at Thanksgiving, "you need so many more volunteers," she said.

"Each year, I notice that there are more and more people who say, 'We can put off our [Thanksgiving] dinner, we can have it the next day or take out a two-hour block of time and go volunteer,'" Grimes said. "The whole family will do it and then go home and have their meal."

Grimes said the food bank is so busy during the holiday season that she puts aside her work as executive director and is "out there helping to put these pallets of food together myself. I get to join in. I love that."

Read more about American Thanksgiving ([http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life\\_and\\_culture/holidays/](http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/holidays/)

[http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life\\_and\\_culture/holidays/thanksgiving\\_day.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/holidays/thanksgiving_day.html)) and its traditions.

A transcript (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/11/20071119-9.html>) of President Bush's remarks at Berkeley Plantation is available on the White House Web site. See also the president's Thanksgiving Day Proclamation (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=texttransenglish&y=2007&m=November&x=20071115182226xjsnommis0.624737>).

More information (<http://www.berkeleyplantation.com/history.html>) about Berkeley Plantation's claim for the first Thanksgiving is available on its Web site.

More information (<http://www.plimoth.org/kids/homeworkHelp/thanksgiving.php>) about the Plymouth Colony's claim for the first Thanksgiving is on the Plimoth Plantation Web site.

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## Dr. Mekonen Haddis Extends His Lecture Series to Bahir Dar University



*Dr. Mekonen Haddis*

Dr. Mekonen Haddis, US scholar, poet and consultant, continued his talks in Ethiopia on "Ethics, Democracy and Good Governance" on November 19. Speaking to more than 300 students at Bahir Dar University, he discussed topics related to ethics in government. Citing the experience of the United States, he noted the importance of creating common Ethiopian values to encourage the growth of democracy in a multi-ethnic society. Following the lecture, students gathered around Dr. Mekonen to ask questions about the role of the media in a democracy and specific questions on issues related to religion and ethnicity in governmental institutions.♦

## New Africa Command Will Promote Security and Spur Development

*By David McKeeby*  
*USINFO Staff Writer*

**Washington** -- Helping Africans confront security challenges in their region long has been a priority of the United States, say senior U.S. officials. But the military's new Africa Command (AFRICOM) also will prove an essential tool in continuing an equally long-standing commitment to helping communities across the continent strengthen governance, improve health care and meet economic development goals.



*Stephen Mull*  
*Acting Assistant*  
*Secretary of State for*  
*Political-Military Affairs*

In November 14 congressional testimony, however, Stephen Mull, acting assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, said that in meetings with leaders from Africa and Europe, he continues to encounter many misperceptions about AFRICOM, established by the Defense Department in February as the newest of its six geographic

divisions to monitor security threats. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=February&x=20070206170933MVyelwarCO.2182581>).

Mull was joined by Ryan Henry, principal deputy under secretary for policy at the Defense Department, and the AFRICOM commander, Army General William "Kip" Ward, at a House Armed Services Committee hearing, to dispel the prevailing myths about the new command, such as the notion that AFRICOM represents a "military takeover" of U.S. foreign policy toward Africa.

AFRICOM's purpose, said Mull, is to build strong military-to-military partnerships in the region. By doing so, it will support and complement, not overshadow, aid programs offered through American embassies by the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Henry said the United States spends \$9 billion a year through the State Department and USAID to help Africans deliver medical care, promote trade and new business opportunities and build more effective governance structures. In contrast, he said, the United States spends only \$250 million a year for security assistance programs -- half of which goes directly to supporting the African Union's peacekeeping mission in Sudan.

Like other military commands monitoring Latin America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia, Ward said, AF-

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## Treasury's Paulson Says African Leadership Vital in Four Areas

*By Phillip Kurata  
USINFO Staff Writer*

**Washington** -- Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson has identified four areas where African leadership is vital to accelerate and sustain economic development -- natural resource protection, financial markets, business climates and free trade.

In a speech to the U.S.-Africa Business Summit in Cape Town, South Africa, November 16, Paulson said

The secretary said that improving the business climates by enhancing transparency, shortening the business startup process, and strengthening the rule of law and property rights will allow more businesses to be formed, thereby nurturing competition. "Greater competition is vital for improving productivity, fostering innovation and generating jobs," he said.

As for free trade, Paulson appealed to the participants in the U.S.-Africa Business Summit to embrace it.

ing investor interest in the continent. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=November&x=20071113174512WCyeroC0.6948511> ).

Paulson said that U.S. economic assistance to Africa increasingly is directed toward supporting countries that are fostering free markets, sound fiscal and monetary policies, transparency and the rule of law.

Before arriving in Cape Town, Paulson visited Tanzania, where he and Tanzanian Finance Minister Zakia Meghji co-hosted a discussion on regional financial integration with the other finance ministers of the East African Community. While in Tanzania, he also visited an innovative land trust and toured a mosquito net factory.

On November 19, Paulson will be in Ghana to meet with President John Kufuor and co-host with Ghanaian Finance Minister Kwadwo Baah-Wiredu a meeting with private-sector financial leaders on financial development in West Africa, following a tour of the Ghana Stock Exchange. Later that day, he will be joined by U.K. Chancellor of the Exchequer Alistair Darling and African Development Bank President Donald Kaberuka during a tour of Akosombo Dam to discuss infrastructure investment.

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*U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson*

that competition for natural resources often has been the cause of conflict in Africa. He added that protection of those resources is "key to Africa's long-term, sustainable and inclusive economic advancement."

Regarding the need for properly regulated and well-functioning financial markets, Paulson said: "Lack of access to finance ... is one of the biggest constraints for private sector growth in Africa. Less than 20 percent of Africans have bank accounts -- the lowest level in the world."

"It is a development strategy that has worked for countries as diverse as Singapore, Chile, Ireland and Mauritius. And it is a strategy that can work for other countries in Africa," he said.

While the international community can support Africa's reforms, it is the continent's leaders and people who "must maintain a firm commitment to reform, combat corruption, respect human rights, adhere to the rule of law and spread the benefits of economic growth to more of Africa's population," Paulson said.

The secretary is on a three-nation trip to Africa, November 14-19, undertaken to attend a meeting of G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors and discuss the positive economic changes taking place on the continent with government and business leaders. Africa is experiencing its highest rates of growth and lowest levels of inflation in 30 years, prompting increas-

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## Egyptian Is First Blogger To Receive Journalism's Knight Award

By Stephen Kaufman  
USINFO Staff Writer

**Washington** -- For the first time, the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) has awarded a Knight International Journalism Award to a blogger, Egypt's Wael Abbas, recognizing his role in bringing controversial subjects to the attention of his country's mainstream media and public.

ICFJ also awarded Burma's May Thingyan Hein with the Knight



*Conditions are not good for bloggers and the media in Egypt, award-winning blogger Wael Abbas says. Pictured is blogger Abdel Kareem Nabil Suleiman, who has been in detention since November 2006. (© AP Images)*

Award, paying tribute to her perseverance with the country's media censors that led to the dissemination of information on avian flu and HIV/AIDS to the Burmese public.

The Knight Award, given annually, recognizes individuals who have raised media excellence standards in their countries. Speaking at the National Press Club in Washington November 12, ICFJ President Joyce Barnathan praised Hein and Abbas for maintaining journalistic integrity in two countries where the exercise of free expression can lead to har-

assment or imprisonment.

"They try their best to uphold the highest journalism standards, and they've done an incredible job in maintaining free flows of information in the face of tremendous pressure and direct censorship," Barnathan said.

She said that Egypt has been named by the Center for Independent Journalism as one of the top 10 "backsliders" among countries where press freedom is eroding and that Abbas' blog, Misr Digital, "breaks stories ... that are often avoided by the local media," such as protests, corruption and police brutality.

Created in 2004, Misr Digital attracts an average 30,000 visitors per day and 1 million per month. More significant, Barnathan said, the blog has forced the mainstream media to follow up on Abbas' reports due to the large public reaction.

Abbas himself has faced arrest by Egyptian authorities, but the content he has posted on his blog is making a difference. For example, a video he featured of two Egyptian policemen abusing a detainee led to a recent Egyptian court sentence against the officers, which Barnathan called a "breakthrough" event for the country.

At the National Press Club, Abbas said the Knight Award is "very prestigious ... and respected all over the world," including Egypt, and he hoped the award will help raise awareness of his blog.

"It is not the best time for the media and the blogging community," he said, since the regime is cracking down and trying to tarnish the bloggers' reputations by accusing them of treason and acting on behalf of those outside Egypt.

In February, 22-year-old blogger and student Abdel Karim Nabil Suleiman was sentenced to four years in prison because Egyptian authorities claimed his posts insulted Islam and President Hosni Mubarak. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfileenglish&y=2007&m=February&x=20070222153604esna mfuak0.2887384>).

However, Abbas said Egypt's bloggers have built up credibility with the public because they have broken stories the mainstream media would not publish, often using video and photographs submitted by the public to provide further evidence for their reports.

He said Egyptian citizens, often using cell phone cameras and other hand-held devices, tend to give the bloggers their material exclusively since they know it is less likely to be censored than if they submitted it to traditional media outlets.

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## American Democracy Built on Volunteer Spirit

By Robin Yeager  
USINFO Staff Writer

**Washington** -- Volunteerism continues to be crucial to a functioning democracy, American authors Susan Ellis and Katherine Campbell say in their book *By the People*.

Civic voluntary activity long has been a noteworthy aspect of American society. Volunteers helped shape the nation and continue to contribute to its prosperity. The more citizens involve themselves as volunteers, "the closer they come to making the ideals of democracy real," the authors, who are experts in volunteerism, say.

American volunteerism includes such activities as serving on community committees, raising funds for worthy causes, working to preserve historical landmarks, serving on fire and ambulance crews and leading youth groups.

Within American institutions, professions and social events, the impact of volunteerism has been noteworthy. Volunteerism is a "method of accomplishing a shared social goal" that has been adopted quickly by "every new wave of immigrants," Ellis and Noyes say.

"European settlers of the new American colonies all had the same priority: survival. ... Cooperation frequently meant the difference between life and death," the authors say.

To achieve this cooperation, members of every new community had to assume a variety of roles covering every aspect of need. They adapted the institutions and beliefs they brought with them into new models. The settlers discovered that this mutual service did more than simply provide for survival; it also

"provided social outlets and promoted a sense of community," the authors say. The new system came

management, emergency response, newspapers, mail delivery and caring for the poor.



*President Truman, left, gets a Red Cross emblem from Bob Hope in 1948. Joseph Grew, head of a fundraising drive, watches. (© AP Images)*

to define much about American life.

Without a diversified government, many aspects of society at the time were handled by individual volunteers or voluntary societies. As settlements grew, they adopted forms of government that strengthened mutual ties and depended on individual service.

Books were rare, so personal collections were shared, and often donated to the community. Historical documents often were combined with the book collections, creating local libraries and museums. As cities appeared, many services eventually were taken over by the government. But in the beginning, they were done by interested citizens.

Volunteers also delivered services in areas such as education, crime

As Americans pushed westward into new territories, families traveled in groups for safety. These "mobile communities" divided tasks among their members, with each person's contributions being important to the success of the entire group.

This spirit carried over when they reached new lands. Experimenting with new approaches to community organization, settlers developed "democratic governing codes" built on mutual aid and individual volunteer service -- codes that later formed the basis for state constitutions, the authors say. As the United States grew, groups formed to address problems of newly arrived immigrant groups.

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## U.S. Student Visas Reach Record Numbers in 2007

*By Jaroslaw Anders*  
*USINFO Staff Writer*

**Washington** -- In 2007, the Department of State issued a record number of student and exchange visitor visas -- more than 600,000 -- greater than 10 percent more than last year. The numbers are proof of the success of the U.S. government's effort to reverse the drop in student and other visa applications after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs Maura Harty told USINFO.

"For the last several years, we have been working very hard to address that turnaround and in no category have we been more active than in attracting foreign students," she said.

Speaking at the end of International Education Week, a joint initiative of the U.S. departments of State and Education, Harty said that "the best advertisement for America is America." She said having foreign students in the United States is a matter of national security because academic visitors are the United States' potential friends, allies and business partners.

"If they come to America ... they will learn everything they possibly can about our culture, our people, our academic institutions. They'll see the free lifestyle of the American college campus. They'll have a chance to challenge themselves and grow in ways informed by what they learn about American society," Harty said.

More than 200 alumni of U.S. exchange programs have become heads of foreign states or influential leaders in their own countries, according to State Department data.

They include the presidents of Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines and former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

### REGRETTABLE PERCEPTION

Harty agreed that the "regrettable perception" that the events of September 11, 2001, made the U.S. visa process more cumbersome was correct in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. But she said the "horror stories" of endless waits for name checks are a matter of the past. About 97 percent of people who are told their applications have been approved get their visas within two or three days, she said.

Since September 11, 2001, the United States had to put in place more stringent security measures. "At the same time, we've worked hard over the past years to streamline procedures and make the visa application process easier and more efficient," Harty said.

"I regret that some people are hearing the old stories and applying them to the current situations," she said.

The State Department also has made an effort to "demystify" the visa process, Harty said. Both the United States government and every U.S. embassy have special Web sites with information about the required documents, how far in advance an applicant can schedule an appointment for an interview and what to expect during that interview with a consular official.

In many countries, students can make interview appointments online, and they are usually put in the front of the line. "We won't have a student miss their first day of class because we could not get

them an appointment in time," Harty said.

### NOT A "GOTCHA" GAME

To qualify for a student visa, students must show three things: that they are genuine students enrolled in an American college or university; that they have sufficient funds to pay for their first year of study; and that they intend to return to their home country when they finish their education.

"We do need the applicants to explain to us why they want to study in America and ... how their course of study in America is going to be applied in their life when they return to their country," Harty said.

People who have been rejected multiple times should pay attention to what they were told during their visa interviews and think about whether their circumstances have changed before applying again, Harty said.

She stressed, however, that consular officials are not deliberately looking for reasons to reject visa applicants. "Put your mind at ease," she advised students preparing for their interview. "It is not about 'gotcha.' We are not finding a way to refuse you because that is what we want to do. We are finding a way to identify as many legitimate travelers as we can and to facilitate their travel to the United States," she said.

Harty, who traveled recently to Egypt, Jordan and Israel to meet with potential student visitors and their parents, said she carried the following message: "The welcome mat is out. If you haven't checked in with us in a while, try us. You'll like us. America is open to you and

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## New Africa Command Will Promote Security and . . .

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RICOM will coordinate its activities with embassies in the region. But in doing so, the new command also will use an innovative new organizational structure that brings together military and civilian experts from across the U.S. government to formulate and exchange new policy ideas with their African partners.

“When coordinated and nested in this manner, AFRICOM’s contributions can help African countries effectively address threats such as political instability, terrorism, human rights abuses, cross-border trafficking and international crime,” Mull said.

Another myth, the officials said, is that AFRICOM represents a move by the United States to place a large troop presence in Africa.

While the United States is in discussions with several African nations on a possible headquarters for the command, no new bases will be established, said Henry. Unlike other U.S. military commands, he added, AFRICOM will have a relatively small staff that is able to “reach back” to the United States for resources if needed.

This structure, Ward said, reflects AFRICOM’s mission to work with

regional organizations such as the African Union and its regional economic communities, the nations of Africa and their citizens to provide the tools and training needed to solve regional security challenges before they grow into international crises.

A third myth is that AFRICOM is geared exclusively to fighting terrorism and countering a rising Chinese presence at the expense of other challenges facing the region.

“The United States, China and other countries share a common interest in a stable, secure and rising Africa,” Henry said. “And though we may differ on the means, we look forward to cooperating with China as a responsible international stakeholder to achieve that end.”

While helping governments combat terrorists will be one mission, Ward highlighted several other ongoing activities in the region that illustrate AFRICOM’s future, including joint medical training programs that provide aid to poor communities, training African troops to serve as peacekeepers, and the recently established Africa Partnership Station -- a U.S. Navy ship in the Gulf of Guinea that serves as a “floating school” for military and law enforcement personnel from across the region. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/>

[display.html?](http://display.html?)

[p=washfileenglish&y=2007&m=November&x=20071109095818sjhtrop0.1391107](http://p=washfileenglish&y=2007&m=November&x=20071109095818sjhtrop0.1391107)).

“It begins with understanding our African partners’ definitions of their own environment and interests and understanding the complexities of the diverse countries and cultures across the continent,” said Ward. “Appreciation of their perspective will allow us to jointly identify ways and means that address both African and American interests.”

Prepared remarks from Mull ([http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/FC111407/Mull\\_Testimony111407.pdf](http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/FC111407/Mull_Testimony111407.pdf)), Henry ([http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/FC111407/Henry\\_Testimony111407.pdf](http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/FC111407/Henry_Testimony111407.pdf)) and Ward ([http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/FC111407/Ward\\_Testimony111407.pdf](http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/FC111407/Ward_Testimony111407.pdf)) are available on the House Armed Services Committee Web site.

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## U.S. Student Visas Reach Record Numbers . . .

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to your ideas and we welcome all legitimate travel to this country.”

For more information, see Study in the U.S./Education ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/>

[life\\_and\\_culture/education/study\\_in\\_the\\_us.html](http://life_and_culture/education/study_in_the_us.html) ).

Information on U.S. visas and travel to the United States is available on the Web sites of all U.S. embassies and on the State Department’s <http://travel.state.gov/>

and <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/> Web sites.

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## Security Returns to the West Bank Town of Nablus

**By Grace Bradley**  
**USINFO Special Correspondent**

**Nablus, West Bank** -- In the Kasbah of Old Nablus, a new brigade of professional security forces is on patrol.

"This is a first, important step toward the Palestinian Authority taking security in the Palestinian Territories," Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad told reporters during his first official visit to the West Bank town of Nablus.

Prior to the new security plan, which took effect in late summer and culminated with the deployment of the new elite forces November 2, Nablus was considered too risky for the prime minister to enter. It had become a safe haven for armed thugs who robbed and blackmailed residents with impunity. Skinny gunmen in their 20s menaced each other's territory in gang turf wars when not battling Israeli troops.

But that is changing. Some 300 members of a special Palestinian Authority National Security Force equipped with new Kalashnikov assault rifles and wearing immaculate olive-green uniforms now cruise the streets of Nablus in soft-top jeeps, setting up checkpoints and arresting common criminals. Another 200 professionally trained elite police are due to join them in the near future.

These policemen have been training for months in Jericho, a West Bank oasis town northeast of Jerusalem.

Now, they must impose law and order in the restive town of Nablus, better known for its carjackings and gang shooting sprees. Crime, protection rackets and the settling of scores have plunged this former commercial and educational hub into fear and chaos in the last seven years.

If crime is curbed and streets become safer in this prominent West Bank university town, Western diplomats believe it will increase the pressure on Palestinian militants to disarm, a key step in the road map

Bringing law and order to the mean streets of Nablus is a win-win situation for the Palestinian Authority.

And the residents of Nablus are seeing progress. Traffic anarchy in the city center recently eased when police forcibly removed illegal commercial stalls blocking streets near the old clock tower. And residents say they are beginning to feel safer walking the streets. Residents believe a crackdown on crime and graft will make daily life more viable.



*Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad visited Nablus, the West Bank, for the deployment of the new security forces. (© AP Images)*

to peace in the region. Progress at the upcoming international peace meeting in Annapolis, Maryland, is more likely if Palestinian security forces demonstrate that they can rein in armed gangs and anarchy in Nablus.

The Palestinian Authority also stands to gain stature if its leadership enforces its sovereignty in a place that has flouted authority. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has vowed to bring personal security for ordinary Palestinian citizens, and Israeli officials demand improved security as a prerequisite for progress on political talks.

Kessem Majeed, a middle-aged confectioner, praises the improvement.

"Before, my neighbors' shops got robbed, and sometimes there was shooting," he said. "No one did anything. But now if you call the police they will be here in five minutes."

General Keith Dayton, the United States security coordinator responsible for beefing up security in the region, believes that success in Nablus will send a message to other West Bank trouble spots.

"I believe strongly that Palestinian families deserve to raise their children in a secure environment free of lawlessness and free of fear," Dayton said.

"I have high regard for those in the Palestinian Security Forces who work every day to end chaos and strive to build a society based on the rule of law."

*(USINFO 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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## Report Strengthens Argument for More Iran Sanctions, U.S. Says

**By David McKeeby**  
**USINFO Staff Writer**

**Washington** -- Iran's latest revelations to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about its controversial nuclear program raise more questions than answers, U.S. officials say. The new IAEA report bolsters growing international support for a third round of sanctions to force Tehran to negotiate.

Calling Iran's ongoing nuclear stand-off a "world defining issue," U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad told reporters at the United Nations November 15 that the United States would push for "broad and biting sanctions." (See full transcript ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=texttrans-english&y=2007&m=November&x=20071115173059eaifas0.1500055> ).)

"Based on our review of the document, it is clear that Iran has not fully cooperated," Khalilzad said.

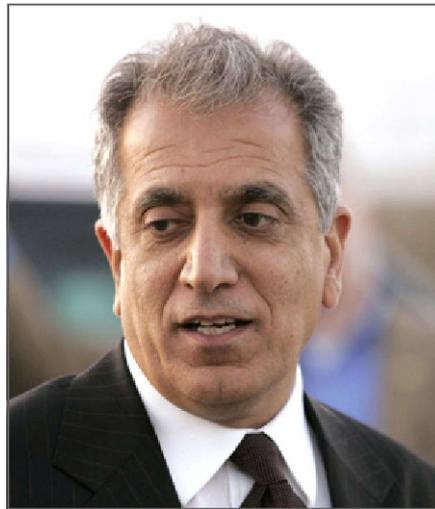
In the report, IAEA Director-General Mohammed ElBaradei welcomed new background on Tehran's decision in the mid-1980s "to acquire nuclear enrichment technologies on the black market," as well as an "updated chronology," shedding further light on Iran's covert nuclear efforts in the 1990s.

But, ElBaradei also concluded that Iran is continuing its nuclear activities and warned that the IAEA's knowledge about Iran's current nuclear program is "diminishing" due to Tehran's decreased cooperation since 2006.

"Unfortunately, this report makes clear that Iran seems uninterested in working with the rest of the

world, and the current Iranian government continues to push Iran deeper into isolation," White House press secretary Dana Perino said November 15. (See full transcript (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=texttransenglish&y=2007&m=November&x=20071115155756xjsnomm is0.7223932>).

The Iranian government claims that its nuclear enrichment activities are



*U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad*

designed to develop civil nuclear power. But the regime's continued refusal to allow United Nations' nuclear inspectors full access to all facilities lead many, including the United States, to suspect that Tehran secretly is seeking nuclear weapons.

In light of these and other questions, Khalilzad called on U.N. Security Council members China and Russia to join France, the United Kingdom and the United States in support of a third round of sanctions.

With Germany, the Security Council members have worked together as the "P5 + 1" to urge Iran to cooper-

ate with the IAEA, while the European Union has pursued its own parallel diplomatic process with Tehran.

Together, they have offered Iran assistance with civil nuclear power Tehran claims to want. Russia has proposed a fuel delivery regime that reduces proliferation concerns, and the United States has offered a chance to turn the page on nearly three decades of strained relations.

The IAEA report follows talks on Iran between Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Chinese officials in Beijing, as well as recent visits to the United States by French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whom President Bush briefed on new U.S. sanctions against Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps and state-owned banks. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=November&x=20071109133219idy-beekcm3.527468e-02> ).

As the IAEA board of governors meets to discuss the report, Under Secretary of State R. Nicholas Burns will be meeting with his counterparts from China, France, Germany, Russia and the United Kingdom to discuss the way forward on another round of sanctions.

"Being isolated is not what the people of Iran would want," Perino said. "They deserve better."

*(USINFO is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)*◆

## State's Negroponte Urges Lifting of Emergency Rule in Pakistan

By David McKeeby  
USINFO Staff Writer

**Washington** -- Emergency rule in Pakistan is undermining years of successful reforms, says Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, who met with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf November 16-17 to underline U.S. concerns about a key regional ally.

"Emergency rule is not compatible with free, fair, and credible elections, which require the active participation of political parties, civil society and the media," Negroponte said in Islamabad, Pakistan, November 18. "The people of Pakistan deserve an opportunity to choose their leaders free from the restrictions that exist under a state of emergency."

While praising Musharraf as "a strong voice against extremism" and citing economic progress and significant reforms during his rule, Negroponte's visit further underlined U.S. concerns. President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in several recent phone calls to Pakistan's president, have urged Musharraf to lift the state of emergency, restore the constitution and release all political detainees ahead of elections, which are scheduled for January 8, 2008.

On November 3, Musharraf declared a state of emergency, which has resulted in arrests of thousands of political opponents and human rights leaders, the dismissal of Supreme Court judges poised to review the legality of his rule and widespread shutdowns of independent television stations. Even former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who recently returned to Pakistan to negotiate her party's return to politics

after several years abroad, was prevented by authorities from leaving her home for a time, disrupting talks and adding to the sense of political crisis.

"We don't think that these kinds of emergency measures are compatible with the kind of environment that is needed to conduct free and fair elections," Negroponte said.

Negroponte welcomed Musharraf's announcement on a date for the elections, as well as his pledge to retire from his army post before he starts his second term in office. During his visit, Negroponte met General Ashfaq Kiyani, who likely would succeed Musharraf as commander of the Pakistani military.

Ahead of the elections, Negroponte also urged Musharraf, Bhutto and other political leaders to redouble their efforts at pursuing political reconciliation to expedite the country's return to civilian rule, which he said was essential if Pakistan is to prevail against the forces of violent extremism.

Amid tensions in Islamabad, Pakistani forces are confronting a pro-Taliban commander whose forces have seized territory in the Swat Valley in the country's Northwest Frontier Province, while 80 people were killed in Sunni-Shia violence in Parachinar, along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan.

"The best way for any country to counter violent extremism is to de-

velop and nurture a moderate political center," Negroponte said. For this reason, he added, "engagement and dialogue -- not brinksmanship and confrontation -- should be the order of the day for all parties."

The full text (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=texttransenglish&y=2007&m=>



Pakistanis protest emergency rule November 19.  
(© AP Images)

November 17 and a transcript (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=texttransenglish&y=2007&m=November&x=20071119164627eafas0.2236902>) of his remarks to reporters on November 18 are available on the State Department Web site.

*(USINFO 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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## Views Mixed on Boycotting 2008 Beijing Olympics

*By Eric Green*  
*USINFO Staff Writer*

**Washington** -- Debate continues on calls from human rights and press freedom groups for a boycott of the 2008 Beijing Olympics to protest the Chinese government's repression of journalists and human rights activists and its policies toward Sudan, but some argue that a boycott would accomplish nothing and could be counterproductive.

One group saying a boycott might be needed is the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders. It says the Chinese government has imprisoned 27 journalists and more than 60 Internet users, making China the "largest prison for journalists in the world." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfileenglish&y=2007&m=August&x=200708081551151xeneerg0.963421>)).

Tala Dowlatshahi, director of the group's New York office, told US-INFO that the Chinese government is compiling files on many journalists and human rights activists before the Olympics, scheduled for Beijing August 8-24, 2008.

Compiling such files, with its dubious purpose to identify what China calls "fake journalists," said Dowlatshahi, is an "invasion of privacy and goes against all the international conventions set up to keep journalists free and independent."

Dowlatshahi said the Swiss-based International Olympic Committee should apply "more pressure" on the Chinese government to end its crackdown on the media. If the situation does not improve, her group would favor a boycott of the Beijing Olympics, she said.

Chinese Olympic officials offer the defense that the government is creating a database on foreign journalists to help the media cover the event and is not attempting to monitor the press or "threaten anyone."

A skeptic of that explanation is the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists. Joel Simon, the group's executive director, said in a November 12 statement that the Olympics "cannot continue to be used as an excuse for restricting press freedom in China."

Simon said that allegations of "fake" reporting are a "transparent justification for extending the Chinese government's strict control of press coverage, in violation of all [its] promises to the contrary. We call on the [Chinese] government to institute the absolute freedom of the press that was guaranteed when the Games were awarded" to China in 2001.

Boycott calls also are coming from several members of the U.S. Congress. California Republican Representative Dana Rohrabacher offered a resolution August 2 urging the United States to boycott the Olympics unless the Chinese government "stops engaging in serious human rights abuses against its citizens." But the measure has gained few co-sponsors in the House of Representatives.

### **STATE DEPARTMENT, U.S. OLYMPIC COMMITTEE OPPOSE BOYCOTT**

The State Department issued a statement June 4 saying it opposes an Olympic boycott. The department's statement came in reaction to suggestions that a threatened boycott would pressure China into

helping stop genocide in the Sudanese province of Darfur.

The Colorado-based U.S. Olympic Committee had a similar negative reaction to tying a boycott with China's policies on Sudan. Darryl Seibel, a committee spokesman, said June 4 the Olympic movement is "about sport, not politics." In reference to Olympic boycotts staged in 1956, 1976, 1980 and 1984, Seibel said that, "as has been demonstrated in the past, boycotts accomplish absolutely nothing other than to unfairly penalize athletes who have spent decades preparing for that moment."

President Bush announced September 6 that he had accepted China's invitation to attend the Beijing Olympics. Bush said the event would be a "great moment of pride for the Chinese people" and also a "moment where China's leaders can use the opportunity to show confidence by demonstrating a commitment to greater openness and tolerance" in Chinese society. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfileenglish&y=2007&m=October&x=200710301713001xeneerg0.6027948>)).

### **U.S. FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR SAYS BOYCOTT WOULD BE "HARMFUL"**

Susan Brownell, a 2007-2008 U.S. Fulbright scholar who is in Beijing researching the upcoming Olympics, told USINFO that a boycott "would be a terrible idea" and "harmful to everyone concerned."

Brownell, associate professor of anthropology at the University of Missouri in St. Louis, said the Olympics, as a nongovernmental organi-

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**Views Mixed on Boycotting 2008 . . .**

*(Continued from page 14)*

zation, serves as "an alternative to mainstream diplomatic channels" and functions "in the cracks between governments." Brownell said her research under the State Department-administered Fulbright program is examining whether the Olympics have contributed to greater mutual cross-cultural understanding between China and Western societies.

Brownell, whose new book Beijing's Games: What the Olympics Mean to China is scheduled for release in February 2008, said the international event will speed up the "formation of a civil society in urban China by perhaps as much as 5-10 years."

Brownell said "it is not possible to keep politics out of the Olympics, and, in fact, their political role is what makes them important in to-

day's world and in the quest for world peace."

An Olympic boycott, she said, "is highly unlikely to happen, though I suppose" the topic "makes good headlines."

For related stories, see The United States and China ([http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/east\\_asia\\_pacific/china.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/east_asia_pacific/china.html)) and Sports ([http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life\\_and\\_culture/sports.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/sports.html)).

More information (<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/fulbright/about.htm>) about the Fulbright Program is on the State Department Web site.

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**American Democracy Built on Volunteer . . .**

*(Continued from page 8)*

Many notables in American history are associated with voluntary efforts or philanthropic development. They include Benjamin Franklin, who in the 18th century founded one of the country's first libraries, the first volunteer fire company and the first zoo; Clara Barton, who worked on the battlefields to help the U.S. Civil War wounded then founded the American National Red Cross, adding disaster service to the European model; and Jane Addams, whose settlement house movement in the late 19th century addressed problems of the urban poor and led to significant social reforms. The support the first settlers received from the local American Indian tribes is

formalized in many of America's Thanksgiving traditions.

Incorporating many traditions, addressing new challenges, learning from working together -- America has developed in an environment that encourages innovation and helping one another. It continues to exemplify the best of what it means to participate in a democratic society.

See also "Volunteerism Is Integral Part of U.S. Culture." (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfileenglish&y=2007&m=February&x=20070226171408xlrennef0.5726892>)

For more information, see Volunteerism & Philanthropy ([http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life\\_and\\_culture/volunteerism.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/volunteerism.html)), "Government Encouragement of Volunteer Efforts (<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0506/ijse/friedman.htm>)" and the eJournal A Nation of Volunteers (<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0998/ijse/ijse0998.htm>).

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