



# Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

## INSIDE

### Patriarch and U.S. Ambassador Discuss Modern Versus Traditional Methods in Treating HIV/AIDS

U.S. Embassy, Addis Ababa, May 23, 2007: His Holiness Abune Paulos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), and U.S. Ambassador Don Yamamoto spoke to gathered worshippers and members of the media at Entoto Mariam Church in the heights of Addis Ababa about the compatibility of Holy Water and Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) for the treatment of HIV/AIDS. Members of the media at the event met with representatives of an association of Persons Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) receiving the dual treatment at Entoto Mariam and at St. Petros Hospital,

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Ambassador Yamamoto addresses worshippers and the press at Entoto Mariam Church with His Holiness Abune Paulos seated at the right.

### Empowering Parent Teacher Associations as an Institution

THURSDAY, MAY 24, 2007 –Save the Children USA hosted a two-day Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Conference today in Addis Ababa to raise awareness on the importance of parental engagement in their children’s education and to help strengthen a network of PTAs across the Ethiopia. The conference

follows three days of experience sharing between Save the Children USA, Tigray Development Association (TDA), PTA members and officials from the Ministry of Education and USAID in Afar and Oromia Regional States.

USAID Mission Director Glenn Anders spoke dur-

ing the conference opening, held at the Global Hotel: “It is imperative that communities get involved in education. Parent Teacher Associations are improving classrooms and helping this country reach its highest educational potential,” Anders said.

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## Patriarch and U.S. Ambassador Discuss Modern Versus Traditional Methods . . .

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and discussed with them their views on receiving both treatment methods simultaneously.

Since 2004, the United States government has been working through a variety of local and international organizations to fight HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is the largest commitment ever by any nation for an international health initiative dedicated to a single disease – a five-year, \$15 billion, multifaceted approach to combating HIV/AIDS around the world through programs to prevent HIV infection, and provide comprehensive care and treatment to those affected and infected by the HIV/AIDS virus.

Several PEPFAR partner organizations have been instrumental in furthering the acceptance of ART combined with Holy Water Treatment in

and around Addis Ababa. These are the Johns Hopkins University-Tsehai Project, International Orthodox Christian Charities, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, and the Addis Ababa HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (HAPCO). These organizations have worked to educate Orthodox clergy on the compatibility of ART with traditional cures such as the application of Holy Water to treat HIV/AIDS. In addition, many individuals, including a number of Holy Water recipients, clergy and the Association of People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) at Entoto have been instrumental in promoting complementary usage of Holy water and ART.

The leadership of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, including the Patriarch, the Holy Synod and the Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (DICAC), have given their full and unwavering support to the concurrent use of ART and Holy Water. Many educational materials

on the subject have been produced and distributed through the church. With this important endorsement, PEPFAR's faith-based initiative can support a comprehensive approach to HIV care and treatment, including the provision of free ART services to the community at Entoto summit. JHU-Tsehai has opened a chronic care clinic two kilometers from the Holy Water site, and has begun providing anti-retroviral care and treatment services to a growing population of Holy Water recipients, enabling HIV positive individuals who come there to get well enough to return home and continue treatment at one of over 100 PEPFAR-supported ART clinics throughout the country. ♦

## Empowering Parent Teacher Associations as an Institution . . .

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The PTA Conference is part of a larger initiative funded by the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that seeks to improve quality and equity in primary education across Ethiopia. For the last five years, Save the Children (Afar, Gambela, Oromia and Somali regional states), World Learning Incorporated (SNNP, Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz Regional States), and TDA in Tigray

have been implementing a project called "BESO II/Community Government Partnership Program." The program invests significant resources in capacity building, coaching, mentoring and small grants assistance to individual PTAs to help increase community involvement in schools. This assistance helps PTAs to create action plans, implement projects, monitor progress and report accomplishments.

As a result of this support and additional efforts by the Ministry of Education, PTAs are now better recognized and stronger institutions. Today's conference allows PTA members and government partners an opportunity to celebrate achievements, discuss challenges, share lessons learned and discuss the way forward. ♦

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## Ethiopian Diaspora in U.S. Supports Health Care Back Home

By Jim Fisher-Thompson  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- International aid by the United States now totals more than \$20 billion a year, but philanthropic giving by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) like the Ethiopian Health Support Foundation also is making significant contributions toward meeting the development and humanitarian needs of poorer countries.

The foundation, established and operated by members of the Ethiopian diaspora in the United States, helped set up the Saint Yared Higher Clinic in Addis Ababa in 2006 and plans to build a general hospital with 100-200 beds in the near future.

The foundation's activities, and the challenges of providing health care in Ethiopia, were the subject of an address by former U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia David Shinn, who spoke to the group May 19 in Kansas City, Missouri.

"For all of its beauty and hard-working people, Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world," Shinn said. The country has only about three physicians per 100,000 people, and life expectancy at birth is 49 for males and 51 for females, he added.

Ethiopia's almost nonexistent health care system is strained by an annual birth rate of 2.3 percent, which increases the population by 2 million every year, said Shinn, who is now an adjunct professor at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs.

The Saint Yared Higher Clinic in Addis Ababa is popular, Shinn said, because it has an active program of visiting doctors and nurses, including a team from Missouri, who provide health care services at the clinic and training at the nursing school. In addition, the clinic provides voluntary comprehensive



Photo by Elynn W. Ogden, MPH, USAID A young boy receives two drops of oral polio vaccine during Ethiopia's 1999 NIDs.

health services to an orphanage that serves 200 children.

Currently, the Ethiopian Health Support Foundation is seeking financial support to keep the clinic operating, build the planned general hospital and pay transportation costs for shipping in-kind donations of medical equipment to Ethiopia, Shinn said.

As a long-term goal, the foundation is helping to develop the Saint Yared Health Maintenance Plan, which is designed to play a role in revolutionizing the health care system in Ethiopia, he added.

Like many U.S. philanthropic NGOs, the Ethiopian Health Support Foundation has no paid staff members. All of its workers are volunteers and every dollar donated goes directly to support health care facilities in Ethiopia.

In addition to the Ethiopian Health Support Foundation, Shinn said, there are other NGOs working on similar agendas. These include the Ethiopian North American Health Professionals Association, People to People Inc., A Glimmer of Hope Foundation, Project Mercy and the Ethiopia Relief Project of Students for International Medical Action.

Even though the problem of providing adequate health care in Ethiopia is huge, Shinn said considerable progress has been made. "The Ethiopian government, and more recently the private sector, have made improved health care a priority activity," he said, and NGOs in the Ethiopian diaspora are "devoting significant efforts to improve the situation."

For more information, see U.S. Aid to Africa ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/aid\\_to\\_africa.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/aid_to_africa.html) ).

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

# U.S. Congress Examines Drinking Water Crisis in Africa

By Jim Fisher-Thompson  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Millions of people in Africa are stricken with preventable diseases every year because they lack what the developed world takes for granted -- clean drinking water.

The why, how and where of providing what many in the West see as the bedrock of sustainable development were examined at a May 16 hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa.

"Africa is one of the most water-impooverished regions ... and the lack of clean water claims the lives of 4,900 children every day," Subcommittee Chairman Donald Payne said.

Lack of clean water worldwide, but especially in Africa, is "a global crisis," Payne said.

Walter North, senior deputy assistant administrator for Africa at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) agreed, adding, that the United States is working with African partners to meet U.N. Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets set to reduce by half by 2015 the number of people without access to clean water.

"More than one child in sub-Saharan Africa dies every minute from diarrheal disease -- a direct result of inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene," North said.

To provide clean water, North said, USAID was funding water-supply activities and hygiene programs worth \$91.6 million for the 2006-2007 fiscal year in more than 30

African countries.

For 2007-2008, he said USAID plans to spend \$8 million more on clean water efforts in Africa focus-



A new water pump on Senegal's Carabane Island is the first source of potable water for islanders. (USAID photo)

ing on three main program areas:

Improving governance and regulation of water utilities at local, national and regional levels;

Changing hygiene behavior with an emphasis on hand washing, filtration and purification of water and maintenance of personal sanitation facilities such as latrines; and

Mobilizing local private-sector financing to build and support projects such as capped wells and piped water systems to supply clean water.

A particular strength of USAID water programs in Africa, North said, is the "leveraging of significant" funding from the private sector.

Domestic capital is available in Africa, he said, but the problem is finding good "bankable" projects and getting business partners interested in helping fund them.

In that regard, USAID has had a number of successes, the official said, including a funding partnership scheme for water improvement in West Africa with the Hilton (hotel) Foundation (the West African Water Initiative), the Coca Cola Company (Community Watershed Partnerships Program) and the Case Foundation (the Play-Pumps Alliance).

North singled out the Play-Pumps project as an especially productive combination of appropriate technology with community ownership -- critical ingredients to the sustainability of clean water projects like community wells.

The PlayPumps Global Development Alliance, he explained, is a \$60 million public-private partnership among USAID, foundations and the South African company PlayPumps International. The device is a merry-go-round that pumps water to the surface from a capped well as children play on it.

North said the goal of the USAID partnership with PlayPumps was to place 4,000 of the innovative water pumps in schools and villages by the year 2010. Part of the costs of

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## U.S.-Africa Forum Expanding Beyond Trade Issues

Washington -- Trade facilitation will share the stage with finance, infrastructure development, product quality standards and a host of other economic issues at the Sixth African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum, U.S. officials say.

The forum, which annually brings together high-level officials from the United States and representatives of the 38 AGOA-eligible countries, will take place in Accra, Ghana, July 18-19. U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns will attend.



Susan Schwab, U.S. Trade Representative

Briefing reporters May 18 at the Washington Foreign Press Center, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, principal deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs, said that in addition to an expanded agenda, for the first time the forum will include private sector and civil society participants. She was joined by representatives from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

AGOA provides duty-free treatment to more than 6,000 products from the AGOA countries. Thomas-Greenfield said that two-way trade between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa rose to a new high of \$71 billion in 2006. U.S. imports of AGOA-eligible products totaled \$44.2 billion last year, up 16 percent from the 2005 level. Even though much of the growth was due to petroleum, she said that excluding petroleum, imports climbed 7 percent, or about \$3.2 billion.

Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Africa Florizelle Liser pointed out that the important aspect of this

growth in trade is the diversification of the products beyond those typical to U.S.-African trade. Among the products being imported are footwear, automobiles, prepared vegetables, processed fruits and cut flowers.

"We know that simply providing market access and duty-free treatment ... is not enough," Liser said. "So we are looking at how do we actually help them to maximize the benefits, and how we can put some very practical steps into place that will in fact do that."

Walter North, acting USAID administrator for African affairs, said that USAID is committed to expanding capacity-building assistance in Africa.

"We're working to strengthen the knowledge and skills of sub-Saharan African private-sector enterprises to take advantage of market opportunities," North said.

With the involvement of participants from the private sector and civil society, the forum will be able to expand on strategies for

strengthening trade and investment, Liser said. She pointed out that after several years of declining textile trade, major buyers like Wal-Mart and Target have been increasing their imports of apparel and textile items from Africa.

The 2007 forum will include a session on textiles and apparel, along with concurrent sessions on agribusiness, home décor and wood products and strategies for diversifying the manufacturing sector.

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### U.S. Congress Examines Drinking Water Crisis in Africa . . .

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the pumps and wells are recouped through advertising displayed on the water towers built to store the water.

In addition to providing clean water and "valuable play equipment," North told lawmakers the Play-Pumps have proved effective in promoting "improved sanitation and hygiene behaviors and a reduction in the spread of HIV/AIDS through public awareness campaigns."

The PlayPumps innovative but simple technology also "spurs economic progress through the development of manufacturing, distribution, parts supply and maintenance services associated with the pump technology," North told the House panel. ♦

## Proposed Immigration Reform Would Change U.S. Visa System

By Jeffrey Thomas  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – If enacted, a proposed plan for immigration reform would create a new merit-based immigration system and provide a path to citizenship for those who have entered the United States illegally.

President Bush and top administration officials provided an overview of the complex proposal after the May 17 announcement of an agreement reached between the administration and a bipartisan group of U.S. senators. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=May&x=200705171605051CJsamohT5.050296e-02> ).)

Certain familiar features of the U.S. immigration system would vanish under the proposal, including the Diversity Lottery Program and U.S. permanent resident cards for siblings and adult children of U.S. citizens and holders of what is known as a “green card.” New features would include a parents’ visitor visa enabling parents to visit children in the United States regularly and for extended periods; a Z visa or four-year, renewable work visa for those present within the United States illegally before January 1, 2007; and a temporary worker program.

### A NEW MERIT-BASED IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

Under the current U.S. immigration system, two-thirds of all green cards are granted to relatives of U.S. citizens. The proposed new system, according to Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, calls for most green cards to be based on a merit system that

counts heavily education, employment skills and experience in the United States. “Family [ties] will come in as a tie-breaker,” Chertoff said in a White House briefing May 17.

Those who applied for green cards on the basis of family ties as of March 2005, however, would be processed within eight years under

would work for those undocumented workers who have not committed crimes.

Those who entered illegally would be able to get a probationary visa to continue to work while a background check is completed. Once certain border-security requirements are met, a Z visa would be issued for four years allowing the holder to



Mexicans line up outside of the U.S. Consulate in Monterrey, Mexico, as they wait for a working visa interview on May 17. (AP Images)

the old rules. “If you waited [in] line, we’re not going to change the rules of the game on you; we’re going to let you get in under the rules of the game as they then existed,” said Chertoff, adding that dealing with the so-called family backlog was a matter of “basic fairness.”

### PROVISIONS FOR THOSE WHO ENTERED UNITED STATES ILLEGALLY

Chertoff explained how the plan

work in the United States and to make visits to his or her home country. Those applying for a Z visa would pay a \$1,000 fine, pass a background check, remain employed, maintain a clean criminal record and receive a counterfeit-proof biometric identification card.

If the holder of the Z visa met all its conditions, which include paying taxes, the visa could be renewed for another four years. After the second renewal – that is, after

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## Proposed Immigration Reform Would Change U.S. Visa System . . .

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eight years – Chertoff said the U.S. government would ensure that there would be enough green cards available “so that anybody who has paid the fines that are required, satisfactorily completed two terms as a Z visa worker, gone back home and filed an application - we’ll be able to accommodate those people who qualify, getting green cards within the following five years.” A Z visa holder applying for a green card would be required to pay an additional \$4,000 fine, to complete certain English language requirements, to return to his or her home country to await processing while the current backlog clears and to demonstrate merit under the merit-based system, according to a White House fact sheet on the proposal. (See fact sheet ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=texttrans-english&y=2007&m=May&x=20070518102723eaifas0.2281763&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html> ).)

There would be a cutoff date for Z visas for people who are undocumented. “The only people who will be eligible to get a Z visa as a person who is here illegally is someone who arrived in this country prior to January 1 of 2007,” Chertoff said, adding that applicants would have to prove they were present in the United States prior to the cutoff date.

The proposal would create a temporary worker program to fill jobs Americans are not taking, setting a cap initially at 400,000. Workers in the program would be limited to three two-year terms, with at least a year spent outside the United States between each term. Temporary workers would be allowed to

bring immediate family members only if they have the financial ability to support them and only if they are covered by health insurance, according to the White House fact sheet.

### NEXT STEPS

The bipartisan agreement has not yet been introduced in Congress as proposed legislation. Once it is, details could change as the bill works its way through House and Senate committees or when it is brought to the floor of the House and Senate for debate. If the House and the Senate pass different versions of the bill, the two would have to be reconciled and passed again by both chambers before the final version is sent to the president for his signature.

If the legislation that becomes law retains the provisions of the current proposal, then certain parts will be contingent on other parts. The proposal contains border-security enforcement triggers: that is, 595 kilometers of fence would have to be completed on the U.S. border with Mexico, 18,000 more border patrol agents would have to be recruited and trained, an electronic verification system would have to be operational so that employers more easily could verify who is a U.S. citizen – all these and other conditions would have to be met before certain other aspects of the plan could be implemented.

Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez, who briefed reporters with Chertoff, also issued a statement indicating that the proposal might change as it makes its way through the legislative process.

“The consensus, the center of this debate, is where the solutions will be found. We must compromise to get a final product that everyone can support. But, the point is that this is an historic bipartisan compromise agreement upon which further progress will be made.”

For additional details, see a transcript ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=texttrans-english&y=2007&m=May&x=20070518162303eaifas0.7868769&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html> ) of remarks by Chertoff, Gutierrez and White House official Joel Kaplan.

The president’s most recent statements on the subject, including the full text ( <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/05/20070517-1.html> ) of the president’s statement on the Senate agreement, are available in Comprehensive Immigration Reform ( <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/immigration> ) on the White House Web site.

The full text ( [http://www.commerce.gov/opa/press/Secretary\\_Gutierrez/2007\\_Releases/May/17\\_Gutierrez\\_Immigration\\_Reform\\_Prposal\\_stmnt.html](http://www.commerce.gov/opa/press/Secretary_Gutierrez/2007_Releases/May/17_Gutierrez_Immigration_Reform_Prposal_stmnt.html) ) of a statement by Gutierrez is available on the Commerce Department Web site.

For more information on U.S. policies, see Visas and Immigration ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global\\_issues/immigration.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/immigration.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>)* ♦

## Contemporary Iranian Art Mixes Persian Symbols, Modern Approach

By Carolee Walker  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Young Iranian artists incorporate traditional Persian symbols in many of the abstract, minimalist or even digital and video works of art currently on exhibit at the Meridian International Center in Washington.

The symbols help Iranian viewers connect to the artwork in “Wishes and Dreams: Iran’s New Generation Emerges” and to their heritage. But even for American viewers, the symbols add depth, contrast and interest. The collection of modern works – approachable and aesthetically pleasing – introduces Americans to contemporary Iran.

Exhibit co-curator Nancy Matthews of the Meridian Center said she and co-curator A. R. Sami Azar, former director of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, set out to gather a sampling of the artwork being done by emerging artists in Iran’s capital, Tehran.

“The majority of the population in Iran today is under the age of 40; this timely exhibition focuses on them,” Matthews said. The artists exhibiting their works are between the ages of 22 and 44.

“The art scene is very active in Tehran, and we wanted to include in the exhibition examples of the most common trends,” Matthews told USINFO. All the works fall into modern categories Americans will find familiar, including portraiture, minimalism, abstraction, expressionism, digital imaging and video projection.

The exhibition, co-sponsored by the Meridian Center and the Tehran University Art Gallery, runs in Washington until July 29 and then will travel to eight other American cities through 2008. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice praised the artwork of the Iranian artists for creating a bridge between Iranian and American culture. Among sweeping white brushstrokes on Rhythm 1, a black-painted diptych, are calligraphic forms. Artist Golnaz Fathi told USINFO that she enjoys the “tension” created by the calligraphy

Fathi is one of 14 of the exhibition’s artists who traveled to Washington in May as part of a cultural exchange sponsored by the State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). The Iranian artists toured Washington museums and galleries and met with local artists before traveling to New York and Kansas City.

At the end of their three-week trip, the Iranian artists will travel to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where they will be introduced to that city’s ar-



Golnaz Fathi, *Rhythm 1* (detail), acrylic on canvas, 2006. (Image courtesy of Golnaz Fathi)

– a traditional Iranian art form – that “dances along the canvas without speaking.” Fathi uses music to inspire her; then she paints calligraphic shapes without concern for any particular letters or words.

Fathi said when she observes Iranians looking at her paintings they are trying to “read” them or find the “secret messages” in them.

“There is a secret in my paintings, but not in the ‘words,’” she said, smiling.

ARTISTS BENEFIT FROM  
CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM

tistic community. Matthews said the bright turquoise and deep sand colors of Alireza Masoumi’s Friday will strike American viewers as reminiscent of New Mexico landscapes. But Masoumi’s painting, with “hills [that] resemble human figures under a turquoise sky” and several traditional Persian symbols, the artist writes, was inspired by Masoumi’s frequent travels to southern Iran.

Minimalist artist Vahid Hakim, who said he too is inspired by the desert, re-creates the weaving of ancient Persian saddlebags in his ink

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## Bush Welcomes NATO Leader at Texas Ranch

By David McKeeby  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Security in Afghanistan, Kosovo's future and European missile defense figured prominently in discussions between President Bush and NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer during a two-day meeting at the president's ranch in Crawford, Texas.

"The secretary-general of NATO has been a strong advocate of fighting terror, spreading freedom, helping the oppressed and modernizing this important alliance," Bush told reporters at a joint press appearance May 21.

The Dutch leader's visit followed the president's May 17 meeting in Washington with outgoing British Prime Minister Tony Blair and marked the beginning of several weeks of intensive diplomacy for Bush, including a visit to Germany for the annual Group of Eight (G8) Summit that will highlight the continuing security challenges facing the trans-Atlantic alliance.

Afghanistan topped the agenda, where Bush and Scheffer reiterated international support for a long-term comprehensive strategy to secure Afghanistan, strengthen its democratic institutions, and help its elected government create new economic opportunity. The United States has contributed 15,000 troops to the NATO-led, 37-nation International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. An additional 10,000 U.S. troops lead a second multinational

force focused on training 100,000 new Afghan soldiers and police officers under the auspices of Operation Enduring Freedom.

But Taliban forces have compensated for losses caused by the 36,000-strong ISAF spring offensive by adopting new tactics aimed at increasing civilian casualties,



President Bush, right, and NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer take part in a joint news conference, Monday, May 21, 2007, at the president's ranch in Crawford, Texas. (AP Photo/Lawrence Jackson)

such as staging attacks on troops from compounds located in crowded neighborhoods and the use of suicide bombers and roadside bombs similar to those seen in Iraq. Unlike the coalition, which strives to avoid civilian casualties, Bush said, "The Taliban likes to surround themselves with innocent civilians. That's part of their modus operandi. They don't mind using human shields because they devalue human life. That's why they're willing to kill innocent people to achieve political objectives."

Nearly 1,600 Afghan civilians have been killed in insurgency-related violence in 2007, a statistic that is leading to protests against Afghan

President Hamid Karzai, who has urged ISAF to exert greater caution. The rising civilian casualty figures also have sparked concern among some leaders of the 26-member NATO alliance about the mission's future.

"Afghanistan is still one of the front lines in our fight against terrorism," Scheffer said, "And it is my strong conviction that that front line should not become a fault line."

Bush and Scheffer urged continued resolve, saying that more troops were needed and that several participating governments must give alliance commanders the tactical flexibility they need by lifting restrictions on how and where their troops can be used by NATO commanders.

"We'll work with our NATO allies to convince them that we must share more of the burden and must all share the risks in meeting our goal," Bush said.

### NATO LEADER SUPPORTS KOSOVO PLAN

Scheffer expressed support for U.N. special envoy Martti Ahtisaari's proposal for "supervised independence" for Kosovo, where 24 NATO members and 11 partner states maintain a 16,000-strong peace-keeping presence following the U.N. administration established in the Serbian province following the 1999 humanitarian crisis.

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## U.S. Defense Institution Takes on Challenge of Peacemaking

By Jim Fisher-Thompson  
USINFO Staff Writer

This is the first in a series of articles on the Naval Postgraduate School.

Monterey, California -- As humanitarian and post-conflict challenges increase across the globe, the U.S. military finds itself playing a larger role in relief and reconstruction efforts, guided intellectually by defense educational institutions like the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey.

Since 2004, when the school's Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies (CSRS) was established, NPS faculty and graduate students have researched and studied how to bridge cultural divides and refine strategies for resolving civil, ethnic and religious strife in failed states.

The center recently hosted a workshop on post-conflict negotiating skills, co-sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), headquartered in Washington.

NPS President Daniel Oliver, a retired vice admiral, welcomed the 40 participants to the May event, noting that the focus of NPS has changed since its founding.

When the school was founded in 1909, Oliver said, its focus was on engineering, science and technical subjects.

But now, he said, "the world has changed, especially since 9/11.

Combat effectiveness is only one piece of what we do [at NPS]. We have been asked over and over what we can do so that our grandchildren have a safe place to live. This [CSRS workshop] is one of those efforts."

In an increasingly dangerous world, Oliver said, "we need to collaborate. But getting that collaboration is difficult because we have to work across language, geographic, religious and ethnic boundaries."

The negotiating skills workshop was especially relevant, Oliver



CSRS Director Matthew Vaccaro

added, because "communication is the beginning of understanding."

CSRS Director Matthew Vaccaro said the purpose of the workshop was to provide peacemakers with educational opportunities in a wide range of stabilization and reconstruction activities for nations emerging from conflict.

Those involved, Vaccaro said, make up "communities" composed of U.S. and foreign militaries, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and multilateral organizations like the United Nations.

Participants at the workshop reflected those communities, with representatives from the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and the

American Red Cross. The foreign element was represented by Lieutenant Commander Roland Bolado of the Philippine Navy and Major Apollinaire Ndayimirije of the Burundian Army.

"The notion is that greater cross-community understanding, collective problem-solving and professional networking will equip individuals to be agents of change within their diverse organizations," Vaccaro said.

The workshop's panels included discussions on cultural differences in conflict situations, the impact of organizational cultures on civil/military relations, perspectives on provincial reconstruction teams, culture and conflict, safe havens, grassroots mediation skills, and impromptu third-party intervention.

During the event, panelists learned the five different negotiating styles -- competing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising and collaborating -- while using role playing and other simulation games to act out various negotiating scenarios.

CSRS is one of a number of centers in NPS's School of International Graduate Studies (SIGS), created in 1993 after the fall of the Soviet Union to educate U.S. and foreign mid-level officers in area studies and international relations.

SIGS's National Security Affairs (NSA) department offers master's and doctoral degrees to its 390 resident students, which include 35 foreign military officers, in addition to short courses it teaches during the academic year to 500 foreign students who travel to the Monterey campus from 87 nations.

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## Rice Discusses Gaza Violence with Palestinian, Israeli Leaders

By David Shelby  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice spoke to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert May 17 to express U.S. concern over factional violence in the Gaza Strip that has left scores of people dead in less than a week.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack May 18 confirmed the telephone conversations between Rice and Olmert and Abbas but he declined to provide details of the calls. "The U.S. government wants to see an end to the violence ... because the victims here are the Palestinian people, innocent Palestinian people," McCormack told reporters.

Nearly 50 people have been killed and dozens wounded in recent clashes between Hamas militants loyal to Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and Fatah forces loyal to Abbas. The eruption in violence comes two months after the parties entered into a Saudi-brokered national unity government.

McCormack blamed Hamas for fueling the violence through attacks on Palestinian security forces. "They need to bring an end to it. And they also, beyond that, need to take those steps that the international



Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

community has asked them to take and that really the Palestinian people want them to take in the name of potentially realizing a Palestinian state," he said.

The international community has demanded that Hamas renounce terrorism, recognize Israel's right to exist and respect all existing agreements between Israel and the Palestinians as a condition for international engagement with the Hamas-led government.

McCormack also condemned Hamas rocket attacks on southern Israel. More than 80 rockets have fallen in and around the Israeli city of Sderot over the past week prompting Israeli strikes on Hamas installations in the Gaza Strip.

McCormack said Israel has the right to defend itself but urged Israeli leaders to be mindful of the consequences an escalation in violence might produce. He said U.S. officials have spoken to Israel about the need to protect Palestinian infrastructure and innocent life.

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

## U.S. Defense Institution Takes on Challenge of Peacemaking . . .

*(Continued from page 10)*

Retired Lieutenant General Robert Ord, SIGS dean, told USINFO that all of the roughly 250 foreign students at NPS are a definite asset to the institution. Because the graduate courses are 12 to 18 months long, the officers bring their wives and children with them. "They are totally integrated [among the other 1,500 U.S. students] in the class-

room, in the housing area," he said.

"So these international and U.S. [students] study, play and socialize together, and [the international students] have a total immersion in American culture," Ord added, which is a bonding experience that can be very significant when they later achieve high rank in their own militaries.

"Of course, at the top of our NPS alumni list is King Abdullah of Jordan," Ord added, who along with his sister, Princess Isha, took short courses at SIGS. Both remain enthusiastic supporters of the school.

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

## U.S.-China Dialogue Opportunity To Address Global Issues

By Andrzej Zwaniecki  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States and China are expected to make progress on a range of bilateral and global issues during their biannual high-level Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED), says a senior U.S. Treasury Department official.

Driving this movement is the recognition in both countries that open markets, innovation and effective social and energy policies are critical to sustainable economic growth, Alan Holmer, the Treasury Department's special envoy for China, told USINFO May 18.

Holmer said the importance of such progress goes beyond bilateral relations.

"As global economic leaders, we have shared global responsibilities, including advancing global trade, strengthening the world economy and addressing global imbalances," he said.

Providing advice and assistance to China on shifting from export-driven growth toward consumption-driven economic expansion will be one of the topics discussed at the May 22-23 meeting of the SED in Washington, Holmer said. Export-led growth has created huge trade surpluses in China and burdened its trading partners, particularly the United States, with huge trade deficits.

But changing the pattern of growth is primarily in China's interest, Holmer said.

"Rebalancing the Chinese economy toward consumption will raise the welfare of the Chinese people and allow China to grow in the future

without generating huge trade surpluses," he said at a May 18 press briefing in Washington.

Other topics expected to be discussed at the SED meeting include reforms of the Chinese financial



Chinese Vice Premier Wu Yi, right, is greeted by Treasury Department special envoy for China Alan Holmer, left, as Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, second from left, looks on, upon her arrival, May 21. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

sector, liberalization of services, an efficient and effective social safety net and protection of intellectual property rights.

Since the first SED meeting in Beijing in December 2006, the pace of reforms in China has picked up in many areas, including government transparency, export subsidies and market access for foreign banks, Holmer said.

He said the administration also hopes to make progress in other areas such as air services and en-

ergy efficiency.

The two countries have been negotiating an open skies agreement, which would remove most of the bilateral restrictions on their airlines. The Bush administration also has promoted advanced technologies as a way to improve energy efficiency. At a more fundamental level, China's energy needs can be addressed through financial market reforms, according to a recent study. Holmer said the high-level meeting will be an opportunity "to build personal relationships and trust" with Chinese officials and provide feedback on the impact their economic policies have on the United States and the rest of the world.

Earlier in May, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson said he encouraged Chinese officials to meet with U.S. lawmakers in Washington.

Holmer, however, declined to confirm whether such a meeting will take place at the time of the SED.

Several key lawmakers have expressed frustration with the pace of the Chinese reforms and what they see as an insufficient commitment to address U.S. concerns. They have threatened to place trade restrictions on Chinese imports unless Beijing allows a more meaningful appreciation of the Chinese currency, the yuan.

The two sides agree in principle on currency appreciation but still remain apart on the timing, Holmer said.

"Our goal is to quicken the pace of reform in China, by helping them

*(Continued on page 13)*

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## Contemporary Iranian Art Mixes Persian Symbols, Modern Approach . . .

*(Continued from page 8)*

works on paper. Hakim uses intertwining forms to recall the texture of small mounds of desert soil that are at once hard and soft.

Two Parrots Picking on a Bowl of Cherries by Rokneddin Haerizadeh "is full of Persian symbols," Matthews said. From the wall fabric to the parrots to the cherries, the artist uses an impressionist technique to tell a story. "Persian painting has always been narrative," Haerizadeh writes in the exhibition notes, "and I am searching for a modern narrative." Iranians will understand the meaning of the symbols, Matthews said, and Americans will enjoy the painting because of its intimate perspective and use of everyday objects.

Bird in Flight is inspired by Forough Farokhzad's poem "The Bird Was Only a Bird," but the expressionist painting is about "feeling," artist Nargess Hashemi told USINFO. Hashemi said she does not use traditional symbols in her canvas, which requires viewers' "emotions, not brains" to connect with the work.

Matthews said many of the artists have been inspired by the 13th-century Iranian poet Jelaluddin Rumi, including Dream of a Woman by Afshin Pirhashemi. "I love Rumi's poetry and make extensive use of its enigmatic meanings in my work," Pirhashemi said.

Installation artist Shahnaz Zehtab, whose Mystery of Creation is based on the theme of an allegorical garden, connoting Heaven, uses geometric patterns and intervening gaps to refer to the divine presence in Islamic art. "The azure gaps indicate limitations imposed upon human beings," Zehtab writes in her exhibition notes.

Video artists Amirali Ghasemi and Ahmed Nadalian use projection imagery to approach contemporary life in Iran. Ghasemi's light-hearted Coffee House Ladies uses a video recorder to capture conversations. "Coffee shops in Iran are symbols, to some degree, of social freedom," Ghasemi writes in his exhibition notes. To protect the women's identities, the artist "blanks" out their faces as they talk about jewelry and friends.

"They talk about what women talk about everywhere," Matthews said. Their small talk does not "say anything significant."

Nadalian's Does the River Still Have Fish? is the artist's important commentary on environmental destruction. Nadalian carves simple fish and other forms on stones and river rocks and places them in rivers. His video shows close ups of the carved rocks "swimming" in rivers threatened by bulldozers; some of the "fish" become broken along the way.

Matthews said that while Nadalian was in Washington during the ECA cultural exchange, he took his tools to Rock Creek in northwest Washington to remove stones and make his carvings there. When he finished, he returned the Washington "fish" to the creek.

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

## U.S.-China Dialogue Opportunity To Address Global Issues . . .

*(Continued from page 12)*

understand that the greater risk lies in moving too slowly, not in moving too quickly," he said.

The day Holmer spoke, China announced it would allow its currency to rise or fall by 0.5 percent against a basket of currencies that includes the U.S. dollar, up from the current 0.3 percent margin.

At the briefing, Holmer called it a

"useful step toward greater flexibility and an eventual float of the currency."

Paulson, who will host the meeting, will be joined by the U.S. secretaries of agriculture, commerce, labor, health and human services, transportation and energy. Also attending will be the U.S. trade representative, Environmental Protection Agency administrator, deputy secretary of state and the Federal Reserve chairman.

For more information on U.S. policies, 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) ).

*(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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## Presidential Proclamation for Memorial Day, Prayer for Peace 2007

(begin text)

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary  
May 15, 2007

PRAYER FOR PEACE, MEMORIAL  
DAY, 2007

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
A PROCLAMATION

On Memorial Day, Americans pause with solemn gratitude and deep respect for all our fallen service men and women who have given their lives for our country and our freedom.

Through the generations, the courageous and selfless patriots of our Armed Forces have secured our liberty and borne its great and precious cost. When it has mattered most, patriots from every corner of our Nation have taken up arms to uphold the ideals that make our country a beacon of hope and freedom for the entire world. By answering the call of duty with valor and unrelenting determination, they have set a standard of courage and idealism that inspires us all.

All Americans honor the memory of the lives that have been lost in defense of our freedom. Our Nation mourns them, and their example of strength and perseverance gives us resolve. We are also thankful to those who have stood by our service men and women in times of war and times of peace.

Today, the members of our Armed Forces follow in a proud tradition

handed down to them by the heroes that served before them. They are protecting our Nation, advancing the blessings of freedom, and laying the foundation for a more peaceful tomorrow through service that exemplifies the good and decent character of our Nation. America is grateful to all those who have worn the uniform of the Armed Forces of the United States, and we will never forget their sacrifices for our liberty.

On Memorial Day, we honor all those who have fallen by remembering their noble sacrifice for freedom. We also pray for our troops, their families, and for the peace we all seek.

In respect for their devotion to America, the Congress, by a joint resolution approved on May 11, 1950, as amended (64 Stat. 158), has requested the President to issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to observe each Memorial Day as a day of prayer for permanent peace and designating a period on that day when the people of the United States might unite in prayer. The Congress, by Public Law 106-579, has also designated the minute beginning at 3:00 p.m. local time on that day as a time for all Americans to observe the National Moment of Remembrance.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Memorial Day, May 28, 2007, as a day of prayer for permanent peace, and I designate the hour beginning in each locality at 11:00

a.m. of that day as a time to unite in prayer. I also ask all Americans to observe the National Moment of Remembrance beginning at 3:00 p.m., local time, on Memorial Day. I encourage the media to participate in these observances. I also request the Governors of the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the appropriate officials of all units of government, to direct that the flag be flown at half staff until noon on this Memorial Day on all buildings, grounds, and naval vessels throughout the United States, and in all areas under its jurisdiction and control. I also request the people of the United States to display the flag at half staff from their homes for the customary forenoon period.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

GEORGE W. BUSH

(end text)

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

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## Presidential Proclamation on World Trade Week, 2007

WORLD TRADE WEEK, 2007

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
A PROCLAMATION

World trade is essential to promoting global economic growth, development, freedom, and prosperity. During World Trade Week, we underscore our commitment to free and fair trade and acknowledge the benefits of open markets for our citizens and for people around the globe.

Trade creates wealth and opportunities, and United States engagement in the global economy has contributed to rising living standards throughout our country. Businesses that participate in international trade are more productive, have higher employment growth, and pay greater wages. Advancing free trade on a level playing field helps ensure that America benefits from the international market.

My Administration is committed to reducing barriers to trade, strength-

ening our strategic partnerships, and promoting economic growth throughout the world. At the beginning of my Administration, America had free trade agreements with three countries. Today, we have free trade agreements in force with 14 countries, creating benefits for American businesses, workers, and consumers. These trade agreements are particularly important for small and medium-sized companies to help them identify and take full advantage of new trade opportunities.

The United States continues to work with other nations in the World Trade Organization to complete the Doha Development Round, which has the potential to lift millions of people out of poverty. I have also called upon the Congress to extend Trade Promotion Authority so we can complete the Doha Round and continue to negotiate robust trade agreements. By working to expand trade, we open new markets for American products and services and help build free economies that can raise the standard of

living for families.

NOW, THEREFORE I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 20 through May 26, 2007, as World Trade Week. I encourage all Americans to observe this week with events, trade shows, and educational programs that celebrate the benefits of trade to our Nation and the global economy.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eighteenth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

## Bush Welcomes NATO Leader at Texas Ranch . . .

*(Continued from page 9)*

The U.S. is backing a U.N. Security Council resolution that would establish administration by the European Union, continue the deployment of the NATO-led peacekeeping force and allow Kosovo authorities to declare independence while remaining under international supervision.

Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council with veto power, has concerns about the plan, which Russia argues lacks safeguards for minority ethnic Serbs and might be used as a precedent to resolve "frozen conflicts" in neighboring Moldova, Georgia, and elsewhere

along its periphery. "A resolution is important," Scheffer said. "The Ahtisaari proposals are good proposals."

U.S. CONTINUES MISSILE  
DEFENSE TALKS WITH RUSSIA

The leaders also discussed the proposed installation of missile defense facilities in the Czech Republic and Poland -- another aggravating factor in U.S. and European relations with Russia.

The United States has advocated the bases as part of its commitment to protect its allies from a potential future missile threat from Iran and

North Korea. The Kremlin continues to see the system as a threat, despite consultations by the United States on the project since 2006 and recent visits to Moscow by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Robert Gates to offer cooperation in the development and operation of the system.

Bush pledged that he would continue to engage Russia on missile defense, "to make sure that the Russians understand that this missile shield is not directed at them, but in fact, directed at other nations that could conceivably affect the peace of Europe." ♦

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## HIV/AIDS Fight Remains High Priority for United States

By Judy Aita

USINFO United Nations Correspondent

United Nations -- President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is proving effective, according to Alec Mally, counselor to the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

PEPFAR, now in its fourth year, is beginning to turn the tide against the HIV/AIDS pandemic in some countries, Mally told the U.N. General Assembly May 21.

Mally said that through September 30, 2006, the United States supported life-saving anti-retroviral treatment for 822,000 people in 15 countries and cared for 4.5 million people, including 2 million orphans and vulnerable children.

The \$15 billion PEPFAR program supports HIV/AIDS prevention efforts as well as treatment and care for people infected and affected by the virus. U.S. funds for the initiative have grown from \$840 million in 2002 to \$2.4 billion in 2004 and \$3.2 billion in 2006.

Speaking during a U.N. General Assembly session reviewing the world's progress toward universal access to HIV/AIDS care, Mally said PEPFAR has supported behavior change messages for millions of people of all ages and social strata and the development of safe blood systems. PEPFAR also has supported services to prevent transmission of HIV from pregnant women to their children during more than 6 million pregnancies, averting an estimated 101,000 infant infections, he said.

According to Mally, two areas that can have a huge impact on univer-

sal access to HIV/AIDS programs are: (1) increasing the number of health care workers by including training programs as part of HIV/AIDS programs, and (2) developing programs that focus on ending discrimination and stigma so that more people will get tested and seek counseling.

The General Assembly review comes one year after it held a high-level meeting on AIDS in May 2006 setting new goals to combat the pandemic by 2010.

"What the developing world needs now is for us to fulfill the commitments we have made," Mally said. "The United States looks forward to working with nations and other partners to transform the declarations into a better life for tens of millions of people living with or affected by AIDS."

A report by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says that efforts to expand treatment have gathered momentum with an estimated 2 million people receiving anti-retroviral therapy in low- and middle-income countries -- an increase of 700,000 since December 2005.

The proportion of pregnant women receiving services to prevent mother-to-child transmission has increased from 9 percent in 2005 to 11 percent in 2006. However, if the current increases in care and treatment continue at the same rate, the number of people receiving anti-retroviral drugs in 2010 will be only 4.5 million, less than half those needing treatment.

Ban reported that for every person who starts anti-retroviral treatment, six more become infected. Over the past two years, the number of people living with HIV has increased in every region in the world.

The report warned that many low- and middle-income countries cannot achieve the 2010 goals without international funding for public health and development, especially for health system infrastructure.

The United Nations estimates that \$18 billion is needed by low- and middle-income countries in 2007; nevertheless, only \$10 billion will be available in 2007, slightly more than half of what is needed. The joint U.N. Program for AIDS (UNAIDS) says that \$22 billion a year will be needed by 2008 for AIDS programs, with half going for prevention, another one-fourth for care and treatment of those infected, and the remaining for the care of orphans and children at risk. It is believed that increased financing and services coupled with sustained political leadership can achieve the goal of universal access to treatment by 2010.

All four elements of the response -- treatment, prevention, care and support -- are essential and interconnected, the secretary-general said.

"Make no mistake: In some way or another, we all live with HIV. We are all affected by it. We all need to take responsibility for the response," Ban told the General Assembly.

Mally said one of the most useful suggestions in the secretary-general's report is to "know your epidemic."

"We must be aware of what is driving the epidemic in communities, countries and regions and plan prevention strategies accordingly," he said. ♦

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## International Laboratory Network Watches for Disease Outbreaks

By Cheryl Pellerin  
USINFO Staff Writer

This is the first in a series of articles on the U.S. contribution to global disease surveillance.

Washington -- Disease outbreaks arise from simple movements: a sick person boards a plane to a far-off place; a virus jumps from a duck to a person, changing itself in the process; land developers clear a forest and microbes there seek new hosts; viruses and bacteria evolve into drug-resistant strains.

Until about 10 years ago, it would have been impossible to recognize a resulting epidemic or pandemic early enough in the event to mitigate its effects. Today, an international network of laboratories and scientists is doing just that, with tools on the ground and in space.

At the core of the network is the U.S. Department of Defense Global Emerging Infections Surveillance and Response System (GEIS), with laboratories in the United States and in Cairo, Egypt; Jakarta, Indonesia; Nairobi, Kenya; Lima, Peru; and Bangkok, Thailand.

"We coordinate global disease surveillance for the Department of Defense," GEIS director Colonel Loren Erickson said in a May 17 USINFO interview, "and collaborate across the U.S. government with other federal agencies" and with international groups like the World Health Organization (WHO).

### EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES

GEIS was created in 1996 by a presidential directive that expanded the role of federal agencies, including the Defense Department, to improve domestic and international infectious disease surveillance, pre-

vention and response.

The directive defined emerging infectious diseases as "new, resurgent or drug-resistant infections for which the incidence in humans has increased within the past two decades or threatens to increase in the near future" that present "one of the most significant health challenges facing the global community."

Such diseases include HIV/AIDS, now a pandemic; severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which caused a major epidemic in 2002-2003 of more than 8,000 known cases and 774 deaths; and avian influenza, a disease of birds that has infected people, producing 306 human cases and 185 deaths worldwide since 2003.

Disease surveillance begins in hospitals and clinics, where physicians report cases of targeted diseases to public health laboratories.

In the case of avian flu, cases are confirmed by specially equipped laboratories, and epidemiologists investigate key aspects of disease activity -- time, location, virus type and disease severity. Analyzing such information allows scientists to predict disease transmission and guides control measures.

Outbreaks of some diseases can be predicted in advance. Beginning in the late 1990s, scientists from NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Maryland found a way to do this with Rift Valley fever, a viral disease carried by mosquitoes that infects cattle, buffalo, sheep and goats. From those hosts, the virus then can infect people.

According to WHO, Rift Valley fever

can cause severe disease in animals and people, leading to high morbidity and mortality.

### MONITORING DISEASE FROM SPACE

For about 10 years, through the GEIS program, NASA scientists have been using satellite climate observations -- near-real-time vegetation measurements, sea-surface temperatures and more -- to monitor rainfall conditions in East Africa that are associated with the outbreak of diseases, including Rift Valley fever.

"These are areas that undergo frequent droughts and flood events," said Assaf Anyamba, a research scientist with the Goddard Earth Sciences and Technology Center, in a recent USINFO interview. "For example, two years ago there was a huge drought in eastern Africa. This year there are huge floods. These changes in climate are resulting in the emergence of various types of diseases."

Every month, Anyamba and his colleagues submit disease risk maps based on satellite observations of rainfall and vegetation. Last year, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued an unscheduled advisory about an El Niño weather pattern, indicating that warmer-than-normal sea surface temperatures across the equator could affect global tropical rain patterns.

"When we first saw the El Niño emerging from the Pacific and the Indian Ocean beginning to warm," Anyamba said, "we issued an early warning. As we began to see the rain, we issued another early warning, showing that the rainfall was

*(Continued on page 20)*

## Nutritionally Enhanced Products Boosting Food Aid Programs

By Kathryn McConnell  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The food industry and nongovernmental international development groups are partnering with the U.S. government to develop and provide more types of nutritionally enhanced food aid to countries tackling the problems of hunger and illnesses associated with malnutrition, authorities on food aid say.

Nutritionally improved soy, peanut and potato products meeting local taste and texture preferences are among those being used in U.S. food aid programs. The enhanced foods are being used in food-based therapies for severely underweight children, famine victims and people affected by such illnesses as HIV/AIDS so they can boost their immune systems, according to those familiar with the programs.

One public-private partnership provides free protein-rich soy meals at community feeding centers in Mozambique to vulnerable groups and low-cost meals to the general population.

The partnership involves the Food for Progress program administered by the U.S. Agriculture Department (USDA), the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the American Soybean Association, the Massachusetts-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) Planet Aid and the government of Mozambique.

Through the program, U.S.-donated soy oil sold locally has provided proceeds for supporting the training of hundreds of rural primary school teachers and an agricultural training program for local farmers, Marie Lichtenberg, director of international

partnerships for Planet Aid, told USINFO.

Proceeds from soy oil sales also support recruiting and training field officers who share with communi-



Nutritionally improved soy is among a number of products being used by the United States as food-based therapies. (AP Images)

ties information about AIDS prevention, visiting HIV/AIDS patients to ensure they are taking their medications properly and testing individuals for HIV, Lichtenberg said.

Local workers trained by field workers are employed in the feeding centers, learning about good nutrition, proper food preparation and basic business skills.

Another U.S. food aid partner is the United States Potato Board, whose

producer members are providing fortified dehydrated potato flakes and granules for existing U.S. food aid programs that support maternal and child health, food for education, disaster relief and transitions from conflict.

Dehydrated potatoes are going to such countries as Zambia, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Haiti, Indonesia, Senegal, Bolivia and Nicaragua, the potato board says. The donations are accompanied by cooking workshops on how to prepare the foods safely.

Dehydrated potatoes are good for emergencies because they require little fuel and time to prepare. They are accepted widely and easily can be incorporated into a variety of local foods such as tortillas, soups and bread, and can be included in lightweight take-home packages.

The potato products can be reconstituted with mother's breast milk as well as with clean water and are suitable for therapeutic feeding for people who have poor digestive systems such as those with HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other illnesses, the board says.

In Malawi, the Missouri-based nonprofit group Project Peanut Butter, founded by Washington University pediatrician and former Fulbright Scholar Mark Manary, is using the peanut-based, ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUFT).

Supplemented with vitamins and minerals, RUFT is a peanut-and-dried milk paste similar to peanut

*(Continued on page 20)*

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## U.S. Agency Predicts Active 2007 Hurricane Season

By Cheryl Pellerin  
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Scientists at the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center projected a 75 percent chance that the Atlantic hurricane season will “above normal,” predicting three to five major hurricanes for the 2007 season.

An average Atlantic hurricane season brings 11 named storms, with six becoming hurricanes, including two major hurricanes. The Atlantic hurricane season is June 1 through November 30, with peak activity occurring August through October.

“NOAA scientists predicted 13 to 17 named storms,” NOAA Administrator Conrad Lautenbacher said during a May 22 release of NOAA's 2007 Atlantic Hurricane Season Outlook, “with seven to 10 becoming hurricanes, of which three to five could become major hurricanes of Category 3 strength or higher.”

Major hurricanes -- Category 3 and higher – have winds of 178 kilometers per hour to 209 kilometers per hour. Storm surge can be 2.7 meters to 3.6 meters above normal, and low-lying residences within several blocks of the shoreline might have to be evacuated.

Climate patterns responsible for the expected above-normal hurricane activity are the ongoing multidecadal signal (a set of ocean and atmospheric conditions that arose in 1995 and spawn increased Atlantic hurricane activity), warmer-than-normal sea surface temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean, and the El Niño/La Niña cycle.

In this naturally occurring cycle, also called the El Niño/Southern Oscillation, El Niño is the warm phase and is sometimes called a Pacific

warm episode. El Niño originally referred to an annual warming of sea-surface temperatures along the west coast of tropical South America. The cool phase is La Niña, a periodic cooling of surface ocean waters in the eastern tropical Pacific.

Both conditions affect weather patterns around the world.

### THE EL NIÑO/LA NIÑA CYCLE

In 2006, NOAA's seasonal hurricane predictions proved too high when an unexpected El Niño rapidly developed and created a hostile environment for Atlantic storms to form and strengthen.

El Niño typically suppresses hurricane activity by increasing vertical wind shear over the Caribbean Sea region. Vertical wind shear is the magnitude of wind change with height. Hurricanes need low values of vertical wind shear between the surface and the upper atmosphere. High vertical wind shear can disrupt a tropical cyclone trying to form by literally tearing it apart.

When storms developed during the 2006 season, steering currents kept most of them over open water and away from land.

A La Niña weather pattern has the opposite effect on hurricane activity.

“There is some uncertainty this year as to whether or not La Niña will form, and if it does how strong it will be,” said Gerry Bell, lead seasonal hurricane forecaster at the NOAA Climate Prediction Center.

According to the center, a La Niña could form in the next month to three months. If the La Niña develops, storm activity likely will be in the upper end of the predicted range, or higher depending on how strong the La Niña becomes.

“Even if La Niña does not develop,” Bell said, “conditions associated with the ongoing active hurricane era still favor an above-normal season.”

### AFRICAN DUST AND HURRICANES

African winds and dust conditions also influence the birth of hurricanes in the Atlantic Ocean, Bell said, and scientists from NOAA, NASA, universities and international agencies are engaged in a project called the African Monsoon Multidisciplinary Analyses, aimed at improving knowledge and understanding of the West African monsoon and its variability.

How the dust influences Atlantic hurricanes still is being studied, Bell said.

“Some people argue that it affects the radiation balances and can therefore affect atmospheric stability,” he said. “Others say the dust is simply a manifestation of extremely dry air coming off the Sahara. We see African dust outbreaks a lot, and it's not clear if it actually affects seasonal [hurricane] activity or not.”

The Atlantic Hurricane Seasonal Outlook is an official forecast product of the NOAA Climate Prediction Center.

Instituted in 1998, the outlook is produced in collaboration among NOAA scientists at the NOAA Climate Prediction Center, NOAA National Hurricane Center, NOAA Hurricane Research Division and the NOAA Hydrometeorological Prediction Center. The NOAA Climate Prediction Center will issue an updated seasonal forecast in August just before the season's historical peak.

◆

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## Nutritionally Enhanced Products Boosting Food Aid Programs . . .

*(Continued from page 18)*

butter. Approved by USAID as a life-saving component of its food aid programs, RUFT is dense with energy, may be stored for long periods, does not require mixing with water (eliminating a risk of contamination), and does not need to be cooked, Manary told USINFO.

Partnering with the U.S. Agency for International Development Global Development Alliance partnership program, the French company Nutriset, a Malawi NGO, UNICEF and the World Food Programme, Project Peanut Butter also is helping Malawians learn to manufacture locally RUFT, also known commercially as Plum-pynut®, Manary said.

The product has been used successfully in home-based care as a primary therapeutic food after initial inpatient care and caretaker training, reducing costs associated with feeding centers

For more information about U.S. partnership in foreign aid see Partnership for a Better Life ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/partners/> ).

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

## International Laboratory Network Watches for Disease Outbreaks . . .

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on the scale of [a Rift Valley fever outbreak there in] 1997-1998. As the land began to green up, because these areas were very dry, you had conditions that were conducive to the emergence of mosquito vectors [virus carriers] and their propagation."

In that series of warnings, Anyamba and his colleagues provided the forecast that helped Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania prepare for the Rift Valley fever outbreak that is occurring now, and allowed international partners -- WHO, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and others -- to help miti-

gate the outbreak by arriving with personal protective equipment, such as gloves, masks and mosquito nets, to protect against the spike in malaria cases that occurs during flooding rains.

December is a month of sacrifice for Muslim populations in the region, and because blood and tissues from sick animals can infect people who handle them, the government temporarily banned the slaughter of camels, sheep, goats and cattle, saving potentially thousands of lives.

Ten years earlier, during the 1997-1998 outbreak, WHO estimated that there were 89,000 human

cases of Rift Valley fever and up to 250 resulting deaths in eastern Kenya and southern Somalia, one of the largest outbreaks of the fever in recorded history.

"The advantage we had this year," Anyamba said, "is the mechanism in place to do observations. It has lessened the impact in terms of the loss of human lives because we have an early-warning system in place."

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