Embassy of the United States, Addis Ababa

Volume 10, Issue 15

April 17, 2008

Weekly Special Report

Produced by the Public Affairs Section

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U.S. Equipment Donation Supports Ethiopian Peacekeepers' Deployment to Darfur

On Thursday, United States Ambassador to Ethiopia Donald Yamamoto officially handed over equipment and supplies worth USD 2.1 million to Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) troops preparing to deploy to Darfur as peacekeepers. This donation is part of a broad United States initiative to support African partners' participation in the United Nations-African Union Mission to Darfur

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Ambassador Yamamoto (right) signs agreement on the donated equipment with Major-General Gezae Abera, Head of the Logistics main department of the Ethiopian Ministry of National Defense

Education in a Changing World: From Vision to Action

Dr. Sarah E. Moten, President Bush's Coordinator for the Africa education initiative, addresses workshop participants

United States Holds Africa Regional Education Workshop in Addis Ababa

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Africa Regional Education Workshop entitled 'Education in a Changing World: From Vision to Action' took place in Addis Ababa from April 13 – 18, 2008. The Honorable President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, President Girma Woldegiorgis, addressed over 200 participants at the opening of the workshop. He was joined by Dr. Sintayehu Woldemichael, the Minister of Education, Ambassador Cindy L. Courville, the U.S. Ambassador to the African Union, and Ambassador Donald Yamamoto, the U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia. The workshop was con-

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U.S. Equipment Donation Supports Ethiopian Peacekeepers' . . .

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(UNAMID).

At the handover ceremony, Ambassador Yamamoto said, "The United States remains committed to helping the people of Darfur. We are proud to support the Ethiopian contribution to peacekeeping operations there. Ethiopian troops have played a critical role in the success of recent peacekeeping operations in Burundi, Ivory Coast, and Liberia, and we commend their pledge to UNAMID."

The supplies handed over in Addis Ababa today will help equip one full troop battalion and three companies of ENDF peacekeepers (more than 800 troops total) for participation in UNAMID. The donated equipment is strictly non-lethal and includes uniforms, boots, helmets, body armor, demining suits, tents, GPS systems, night vision goggles, first aid kits, and insect nets. Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE), the lead implementing partner for the donation, provided ENDF trainers with familiarization training on the new equipment.

Some of the donated equipment and supplies

This support for Ethiopian peacekeepers follows President George W. Bush's February 2008 announcement that the United States will help fund training and equipment for African peacekeepers pledged to deploy under UNAMID.

On his visit to Rwanda, President Bush committed the United States to "assist African nations willing to step forward for the cause of peace in Darfur," singling out for support countries that had pledged troops for UNAMID: Ethiopia, Rwanda, Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, Burkina Faso and Malawi.

Support for UNAMID contributing countries will build on the United States' existing support for peacekeeping operations in Darfur. In the past three years, the United States spent more than $450 million to build, operate and maintain 34 peacekeeping bases camps for African Union forces that are now part of UNAMID. Since 2004, total direct and indirect U.S. support provided to peacekeeping operations in Darfur totals more than USD 600 million.

As Ambassador Yamamoto noted at today's ceremony, "We must all work together to end the crisis in Darfur. Ethiopia's role, as a cornerstone of stability in the region and on the continent, is particularly important." ♦

Education in a Changing World: From Vision to . . .

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ducted by Dr. Sarah E. Moten, President Bush's Coordinator for the Africa Education initiative.

The USAID Africa Regional Education Workshop provides a unique opportunity for educators and policy makers to share knowledge and to create a collective agenda for future education programs in Africa with the shared goal of creating education systems that produce results in, and for, Africa. Twenty Sub-Saharan African countries will be represented at the workshop by well over 200 participants. Additional invited guests include leaders and experts of education sector development in Africa.

The workshop is organized around education challenges, needs and promising practices in Africa. Participants will gain access to state-of-the-art education and technology programs, strengthen sectoral knowledge and develop new skills within a best-practices setting. Some of the education topics that will be examined in light of the rapidly changing world of the 21st century include strategic thinking for education sector planning, learning and assessment, literacy, teacher training and professional development, non-formal schooling, monitoring and evaluation and private sector initiatives and partnerships, providing education in post-crisis/conflict settings, sector responses to HIV/AIDS, increasing access for the most marginalized students, and the costs of schooling and school based reform.

Participants of the regional workshop

President Bush's African Education Initiative and the President's Expanded International Education Initiative will also be discussed in the workshop. The workshop is sponsored by USAID's Africa Bureau Office of Sustainable Development Education Division.

Along with the Africa Education Initiative, U.S. support for quality education in Ethiopia includes scholarships that enable girls to complete secondary education, support for teacher training at the primary level, capacity building in planning and management and community empowerment for school governance. With an emphasis on primary school completion, USAID has been supporting the Ministry of Education in eleven regions since 1995. Overall, USAID has invested approximately US $160 million in financial, technical and managerial resources to support its Basic Education Program. U.S. assistance has resulted in increased access, decreased dropout rates and improved retention, particularly for girls. ♦

United States Support Improves Primary-School Education

More Than One and a Half Million Textbooks Donated Through African Education Initiative

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2008
Addis Ababa (U.S. Embassy) – As part of its ongoing commitment to support Ethiopia's educational system, and an example of the extraordinary collaboration between educators in the United States and Ethiopia, the American people donated today over one and half million English language textbooks to Ethiopia. The donation is part of President George W. Bush's Africa Education Initiative, which increases access to quality basic educational opportunities in Africa. The English language textbooks were developed specifically for Ethiopia and are for use in primary schools for grade 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Speaking at the handover ceremony held at Sefere Selam Primary School in Addis Ababa, Dr. Sarah Moten, President Bush's Coordinator for the Africa Education Initiative said, "Education is the key to future economic growth and lasting democracy, and essential to improving the lives of Ethiopians. We are proud to be working in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Ethiopia's schools to help this country's children be better prepared for productive futures." Also attending the ceremony were Dr. Sintayehu Woldemichael, Minister, Ethiopian Ministry of Education, Dr. Thomas Corts, U.S. Coordinator of Basic Education, U.S. Ambassador Donald Yamamoto and Nancy Estes, USAID-Ethiopia Acting Deputy Mission Director.

One of the activities under the Africa Education Initiative works alongside minority serving colleges and universities in America to develop and provide 15 million textbooks and other learning tools for children throughout Africa. The current focus is on six Sub-Saharan African nations, including Ethiopia. The textbooks donated today were developed by Alabama A&M University of the United States in close collaboration with the Ethiopian Ministry of Education and with financial support through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The three-year partnership between Alabama A&M and the Ministry of Education not only produced over one and a half million textbooks and related learning materials, but also improved content of materials, institutionalized capacity building, teacher training on how to use the textbooks and materials and fostered a long-term relationship.

Ambassador Donald Yamamoto officially handed over new English language textbooks created and donated through the Africa Education Initiative to H.E. Dr. Sintayahu Woldemichael, Minister of Education. In the background is Dr. Sarah Moten, President Bush's Coordinator for the Africa education initiative.

Along with the Africa Education Initiative, U.S. support for quality education in Ethiopia includes scholarships that enable girls to complete secondary education, support for teacher training at the primary level, capacity building in planning [080and management and community empowerment for school governance. With an emphasis on primary school completion, USAID has been supporting the Ministry of Education in eleven regions since 1995. Overall, USAID has invested

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African Development Bank, U.S. Agency to Aid Small Businesses

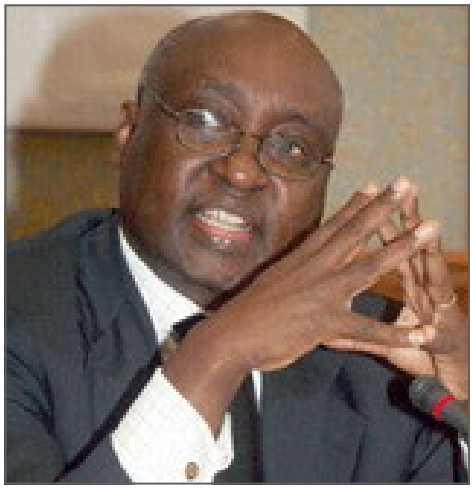
By Merle D. Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington –- Small- and medium-size African businesses often are underserved by large commercial banks because they are too small, and they do not qualify for microfinance loans because they are not small enough, says Henrietta Fore, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

To help these businesses, which often need low-interest loans to grow, USAID and the African Development Bank Group (AfDB) signed an agreement that will mobilize up to $125 million in private financing for these entrepreneurs to grow their businesses. A minimum 25 percent of the businesses helped will be owned by women, USAID said April 15.

"This collaboration between the African Development Bank and USAID will help entrepreneurs throughout Africa access needed credit and will also provide technical assistance to improve their business development skills," Fore said. "Most importantly, we will work with a range of private banks using sound business practices to increase commercial lending to African entrepreneurs."

USAID said that without joint risk guarantees from USAID and AfDB these small businesses probably would not have access to financing. The agreement also signals an important relationship between the development bank and USAID in promoting private sector development in Africa. The agency and the bank expect that it will take less than six months to mobilize the



African Development Bank President Donald Kaberuka

funding, according to USAID.

"Small- and medium-sized enterprises, as we know, create employment and are a critical component of economic growth," Fore said at the signing ceremony in Washington. "This partnership is a prime example of how development organizations can build upon and reinforce one another's strengths. The result is a much-needed expansion of financial services for African entrepreneurs."

The agreement, signed by Fore and AfDB President Donald Kaberuka, marks the first time the two agencies have partnered to extend a joint guarantee, USAID said. The initial agreement is for making financing available to businesses, but the collaborative relationship established by the agreement between the two agencies will last a minimum of five years.

"The ability of entrepreneurs, small businesses and individuals to obtain loans is very limited, so the benefits of launching such a partnership will enable local and international banks to have greater access to ... guarantees, providing a bridge to encourage greater lending," USAID said.

"By demonstrating to the market the viability of [small and medium-size entrepreneurs], private financial institutions will gain the experience necessary to continue lending without additional USAID-AfDB support," it added.

Based on earlier experiences, USAID says it expects to support approximately 26,000 micro-, small- and medium-size businesses throughout Africa with this agreement. USAID and AfDB will develop public-private partnerships with eight African financial institutions in seven countries.

In addition, the USAID-African Development Bank partnership is an integral component of the African Entrepreneur Facility (AEF), which is a public-private sector initiative to support the growth of small and medium-size businesses, Fore said.

"This expansion will spur job creation and will lead to sustainable economic growth," she said. Access to funds will come through joint loan guarantees, and additional capital will be mobilized through funds managed by the Overseas Private Investment Corporation's African Social Development Funds, she said.

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

Violence Against Zimbabwe's Opposition Contrary to Democracy

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington -- The Bush administration has condemned forces loyal to Zimbabwe's government for using violence against opposition supporters, and U.S. officials also criticized Zimbabwe's electoral authorities for their plan to recount the March 29 presidential vote.

Zimbabweans living in South Africa protest outside the Zimbabwean Embassy in Pretoria over election result delays. The US ambassador to the UN Wednesday expressed concern about the "escalating politically motivated" violence in Zimbabwe and urged a joint role by UN and the African Union to resolve the election crisis.
(AFP/Lebohang Mashiloane)

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said members of Zimbabwe's security forces and supporters of President Robert Mugabe's ruling ZANU-PF party have been using violence and intimidation in the wake of Zimbabwe's March 29 presidential and parliamentary elections.

"These incidents appear to target individuals who voted against ZANU-PF candidates during the elections," McCormack said in an April 11 statement.

Calling on Mugabe's government to stop perpetrating such incidents immediately and to show restraint and respect for human rights, McCormack said there is "no place for violence or intimidation in a democratic society."

The State Department also updated its travel alert to American citizens in Zimbabwe April 11, saying that some military and police forces, as well as war veterans, are "creating a climate of intimidation and fear across the country."

The travel alert said Americans should be aware that these forces have been especially active in rural areas and high-density suburbs. "There have been attacks on opposition supporters, renewed farm invasions, and arrests of election officials accused of vote tampering. There is a continued risk of arbitrary detention or arrest," the travel alert said.

President Bush telephoned U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon April 15 to discuss the situation in Zimbabwe, according to White House national security spokesman Gordon Johndroe. According to Johndroe, Bush told Ban it is "important for the situation in Zimbabwe to be resolved peacefully and soon. It's gone on too long."

In remarks to reporters April 15, McCormack said Zimbabwe "is in a crisis," both politically, because the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has refused to announce the results of the March 29 presidential contest, and economically, because of long-standing government policies that have led to hyperinflation, food shortages and mass unemployment.

Despite never having released the presidential ballot results, the commission, which is made up of individuals appointed by Mugabe's government, now is calling for a recount of the vote.

McCormack criticized the idea, saying "there has not been a good chain-of-custody regime in place" for the ballots and ballot boxes since the March 29 vote. "Anything could have happened between election day and when a recount takes place, and that's a cause of deep concern not only for the United States but other countries around the globe," he said.

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

Campaigns for National Offices Often Rely on Outside Expertise

By Steve Holgate
Special Correspondent

Portland, Oregon -- As Election Day approaches, U.S campaign organizations shift into high gear. Although most of the thousands of contested posts are in local government and lack full-time campaign staffs, larger campaigns have a number of paid staff positions and big budgets for advertising.

But large campaigns are working in a political environment that presents new challenges. Campaigns are both energized and exhausted by the increasing array of communications media. In addition, party affiliation among voters has weakened, meaning that few candidates can count on winning just because of their party label. The Oregon 1st Congressional District illustrates this point. Even though it has more Republican registered voters than Democrats, the district has sent a Democrat to Congress in every election for more than 30 years.

To meet these challenges, campaigns often hire political consultants for specific tasks. Consultants might design campaign brochures, produce television and radio ads or arrange opinion polling. Consultants often participate in the candidate's policy councils.

Contrary to the popular image of political consultants as steely-eyed gunslingers who would campaign for the devil if the money was right, most consultants have strong political values and work mostly for candidates who share those values. One of the best-known consultants in Oregon is Mark Weiner, whose company, Winning Mark, has a record of success and has won several national awards. The firm often is hired for national campaigns, some outside Oregon and some outside politics. One of its most noted recent campaigns aimed to raise awareness of the crisis in Darfur, a project that reflects Weiner's hopes of working internationally.

A robust, bearded man in his 50s, Weiner recently spoke with America.gov about his work.

MATCHING CONSULTANTS WITH CANDIDATES

Weiner sat in a conference room crowded with brochures, photos and other materials from past campaigns. A television and scattered videotapes attested to an office in the middle of its busiest season. Weiner spoke with the frankness of a man paid to communicate effectively and the ironic humor of someone who has known both victory and defeat.

Discussing the campaign in the Oregon 1st as well as others, he said it is not always easy for a consultant to find a good match with a candidate. Weiner said he occasionally has told a client, "I'll probably vote for you, but if we work together on a campaign we'll probably kill each other."
Weiner also has to judge whether the candidate has any realistic chance of success. "I don't believe in having a candidate spend their money or other people's money on something that I either don't believe in or I don't want to do," he said. In addition, a consultant must be frank with candidates he believes cannot win. "I am the crusher of hopes and dreams," he said with a sardonic smile.

Regarding negative advertising and other campaigns issues, Weiner was blunt: "If it's true and it's relevant, it's important information" that voters need to know. About the public's fascination with polls, he said the polls that matter most are those taken before the campaign begins, which show what is on voters' minds. Such polls help ensure a candidate addresses the issues that matter most. On manipulative consultants who tell a candidate what to say and how to act: "I don't believe in that. The voters are pretty good at smelling out a phony."

Although he works generally with Democrats, Weiner assesses races professionally and objectively. He said that the Oregon 1st is "bluer [leaning more toward the Democrats] than it used to be," but added that the district, like the state has "a great tradition of moderate Republicanism."

Imagining himself working on the Republican campaign, he said, "There are a lot of libertarian and moderate Republicans in the district who are not going to respond well to" the sometimes harsh rhetoric of more extreme candidates. "If you're going to run the Republican campaign," he says, "you have to find a moderate" to take on the incumbent Democrat, David Wu. Crucial to the success of such a campaign is that, "you have to come up with a reason for the voters to fire" the current office holder.

Wu's job, Weiner said, is simpler: "If you're defending the seat, you have to avoid screwing up too badly."

As Election Day approaches, the Republican and Democratic campaigns in the Oregon 1st likely will look to their own consultants to help them run effectively and finish victorious. ♦

Democratic Presidential Nomination Race Seen Ending by July 4

By Eric Green
Staff Writer

Washington -- The race for the Democratic presidential nomination will probably end in June and certainly by America's Independence Day on July 4, political analyst Larry Sabato tells America.gov.

Sabato, a University of Virginia professor of politics, said the race will end "immediately" if Illinois Senator Barack Obama pulls an upset and defeats New York Senator Hillary Clinton in the Pennsylvania primary April 22, a development the professor said would guarantee Obama's nomination. A win by Clinton in Pennsylvania is expected to prolong the race until the last Democratic primaries are held June 3 in Montana and South Dakota.

Sabato said that after that date the party's superdelegates will announce whether they support Obama or Clinton for the nomination. Sabato said the Democratic Party wants its nominee to be determined before it holds its national convention August 25-28 in Denver. (See "Superdelegates May Decide Democratic Nominee (http://www.america.gov/st/elections08-english/2008/Februry/20080204190330hmnietsua0.9187281.html).")

Described by the Wall Street Journal as "probably the most quoted college professor" about politics in the United States, Sabato said the Democratic and Republican national conventions no longer play the deciding role in who wins their parties' respective nominations.

The Republican convention last had a major fight regarding their nomination in 1976 in a race between Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan. That contest lasted into the convention, Sabato said, because the Republican primaries and caucuses produced a near tie between Ford and Reagan.

University of Virginia professor Larry Sabato says the 2008 Democratic nomination race probably will end in June.

But conventions in those years were more important than they are today in picking a candidate, Sabato indicated. Even earlier, in 1968, only a small number of the 50 U.S. states held primaries, with the rest of the states "basically controlled by state-party bosses" who decided what candidate would be chosen, Sabato said.

The primaries were seen as "mere preliminaries" to the "real battle of the convention," where a candidate was selected, he said.

But following what Sabato described as the "fiasco" of the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, remembered for its clashes between anti-Vietnam War protesters and police, and the chaos in the convention hall, the whole concept of how the party should select a candidate changed.

Sabato said the decision was made to take "power away from the party bosses and give it to the people." That resulted, he said, in today's system of states holding primaries or caucuses.

The only real role now for the convention, said Sabato, is to serve as a tie-breaker in the event of a "fluky" result in which no candidate has secured the nomination.

Sabato estimated odds of 65 percent to 70 percent in favor of the Democratic nominee's being decided long before the convention in Denver.

OBAMA SEEN AS DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE

John Fortier, a research fellow for the American Enterprise Institute, agrees with Sabato that it is unlikely the Democratic nominee will be decided by a floor fight at the Denver convention.

This is despite the fact that "for the first time in many years, we have a closely contested race that will go down to nearly the end of primary season," said Fortier, who is the principal contributor to the institute's Election Reform Project, which aims to improve American election policies and administration.

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Democratic Presidential Nomination Race Seen Ending by July 4 . . .

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Fortier told America.gov that he expects Obama to "emerge as the close but clear winner" of the Democratic nomination.

"If Obama were to suddenly collapse" as a candidate, "then a convention scenario is possible. But that storyline is not very likely," said Fortier.

The reason U.S. political parties "do not have convention fights is that the rolling primaries usually lead to a front-runner [emerging] relatively early and all of the other candidates dropping out or lagging far behind," Fortier said.

The 1976 Republican nomination race between Ronald Reagan (left center) and Gerald Ford ended at the national convention. (© AP Images)

"Typically, if a candidate emerges as the front-runner, the other candidates have trouble raising money. Endorsements and superdelegate support also follow the leader."

Fortier foresaw only a few ways for a convention fight to emerge in 2008, which would include a "shifting set of leaders" for the nomination, the immersion of the front-runner in a last-minute scandal, or a health crisis that prompted the front-runner to withdraw from the race.

Political observers thought, said Fortier, that the Republican presidential field might yield no clear front-runner. But, he said, "the system favors bolstering the winner" of the early primaries, which turned out to be Senator John McCain of Arizona. McCain's victories in the New Hampshire and South Carolina primaries propelled him to becoming the Republicans' presumptive nominee.

Fortier said that in the February 5 Super Tuesday primaries, Clinton and Obama essentially were tied for the Democratic nomination. But Obama's 11 straight wins in the nominating contests following Super Tuesday "have given him enough of a lead" to make catching him difficult, said Fortier. However, if the two Democratic candidates remain essentially tied by the end of the primary season in June, then the outcome would be "much less certain, and a convention fight would not be out of the question," he said.

For additional information, see "The Path to the 2008 Presidential Nomination (http://www.america.gov/st/elections08-english/2008/January/20080107110302hmnietsua0.6430017.html)."

United States Support Improves Primary-School . . .

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approximately US $160 million in financial, technical and managerial resources to support its Basic Education Program. U.S. assistance has resulted in increased access, decreased dropout rates and improved retention, particularly for girls.

Today's ceremony takes place as part of the USAID African Regional Education Workshop where over 200 experts in education from 20 African countries have gathered to share knowledge, best practices and innovations in education. As part of the workshop, participants visited a teacher training college, three primary schools and a child day care center. ♦

Americans "Celebrate" Tax Day

By Michael Jay Friedman
Staff Writer

It is for many Americans a chore delayed until the last possible moment. Some resolve to "file early" but instead queue up at local post offices, many of which obligingly remain open until midnight on this one night. Another mid-April has arrived, and once again citizens of the United States rush to file their income tax returns.

Tax Day is not when Americans pay their taxes, but is rather the annual deadline for reconciling their total annual tax obligation against payments withheld from their pay during the preceding year. For more than four in five tax returns, that reconciliation actually results in a refund of overpaid taxes. For those Americans, Tax Day is a genuine holiday.

A woman dressed as the Statue of Liberty waves to attract people to a tax office in Miami April 14, 2008. Tuesday will be the last day to file tax returns in the U.S. (REUTERS/Carlos Barria (UNITED STATES)

Like other nations, the United States uses tax revenues to maintain a government, to furnish common services and to implement social policy and economic objectives.

The U.S. federal income tax is a relatively recent innovation. After rebelling against British taxation, Americans crafted a constitution that limited sharply their federal government's ability to impose "direct" taxes. For much of its history, the United States met its revenue needs by imposing tariff duties on imports and through other "indirect" taxes. During the Civil War, however, the need for revenues increased sharply. Congress in 1862 imposed the nation's first income tax, justifying it as an emergency measure, and repealed it a decade later.

Later in the 19th century, Americans increasingly came to view the income tax as a reform measure because it could be imposed "progressively," with higher levels of income taxed at higher rates. In contrast, the existing tariffs, excise taxes and property taxes struck hard at consumers and farmers. In 1894, Congress enacted a tax on annual incomes exceeding $4,000. The following year, the Supreme Court ruled that tax unconstitutional.

In 1913, the 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution authorized Congress "to lay and collect taxes on incomes." Congress passed such a tax later that year. Even so, the income tax did not become a major revenue source until 1943, when the federal government required that employers withhold estimated obligations from employee paychecks. Today, the income tax is the U.S. federal government's largest source of revenue.

HOW IT WORKS

The federal income tax remains progressive. For each individual, a certain amount is exempt from tax. Certain other expenses also may be deducted from taxable income, or one may elect to use the "standard deduction. Among the most important deductions is one for mortgage interest; this helps Americans afford to own their own homes.

After these exemptions and deductions, the remaining "taxable income" is subjected to taxation in a number of brackets, ranging from 10 percent on the first to 35 percent.

For many years Americans completed their annual tax returns by pencil and paper and mailed them to the Internal Revenue Service, the federal agency that collects taxes and enforces the tax laws. That method still is acceptable, but today many taxpayers use tax-preparation software. These programs prompt for entry of the required data, complete the necessary forms and, if desired, file the tax return electronically. The majority of tax returns are now submitted electronically and most refunds are transmitted

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America Savors Its Music During Jazz Appreciation Month

Each April, the United States celebrates Jazz Appreciation Month (JAM), an opportunity to savor a major American contribution to world culture. Initiated by the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, JAM aims to focus public attention on the music, and on the many talented composers, musicians and other contributors to the sound.

For the enthusiast who wishes to learn more about jazz, the following brief summary prepared by John Edward Hasse, the Smithsonian's curator of American Music, offers a useful starting point. For more information about Jazz Appreciation Month, see the Smithsonian Institution (http://www.smithsonianjazz.org/) Web site.

Jazz musician Duke Ellington prepares to strike up a tune for Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong at the Rainbow Grill in New York City on August 26, 1969. (© AP Images)

Jazz. Jazz is the most consequential, influential and innovative music to emerge from the United States, and New Orleans, Louisiana, is widely known as the birthplace of jazz. No city, except perhaps for New York, has received more visiting jazz aficionados than New Orleans.

New Orleans residents and jazz devotees worldwide flock to the French Quarter and Preservation Hall (http://www.preservationhall.com/), a bare-bones pair of wooden rooms that have served since 1961 as a shrine of sorts to the traditional New Orleans sound. Other New Orleans treasures include the Louisiana State Museum (http://lsm.crt.state.la.us/) exhibition on jazz, complete with the musical instruments of Louis Armstrong, Bix Beiderbecke and other early jazz masters, and the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park Visitor Center (http://www.nps.gov/jazz), which offers self-guided walking tours and other information from its North Peters Street location.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Kansas City, Missouri, was a hotbed of jazz -- Count Basie, Charlie Parker, Mary Lou Williams and other greats performed there. You can get a sense of the music by visiting the old jazz district around 18th and Vine Streets, where you'll find the American Jazz Museum (http://www.americanjazzmuseum.com/) and the historic Gem Theater.

In New York, jazz from all periods can be heard in the city's many historic nightclubs, including the Village Vanguard (http://www.villagevanguard.net/frames.htm), the Blue Note (http://www.bluenote.net/), and Birdland (http://www.birdlandjazz.com/). Harlem's Apollo Theater (http://www.apollotheater.com/) has seen many great jazz artists, as has Carnegie Hall (http://www.carnegiehall.org/) located at 57th Street and 7th Avenue. The city's newest jazz shrine is Jazz at Lincoln Center (http://www.jazzatlincolncenter.org/), a $130-million facility, opened in October 2004, featuring a 1,200-seat concert hall, another 400-seat hall with breathtaking views overlooking Central Park, and a 140-seat nightclub, Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola.

In the Queens borough of New York City stands the home of, to my mind, the most influential U.S. jazz musician, Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong (1901-71). The Louis Arm-

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Bush Orders $200 Million for Emergency Food Relief

By Merle D. Kellerhals, Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington -– Responding aggressively to a worsening global food crisis, President Bush has ordered an estimated $200 million in emergency U.S. food assistance for global relief efforts and to help relieve political instability in some regions.

"This additional food aid will address the impact of rising commodity prices on U.S. emergency food aid programs, and be used to meet unanticipated food aid needs in Africa and elsewhere," the White House said in a statement.

Bush directed Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer April 14 to draw the funds from the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust, which is a food reserve for emergency needs in the developing world, to meet global emergency needs abroad. "With this action, an estimated $200 million in emergency food aid will be made available through the U.S. Agency for International Development," the White House said.

The response began early April 14 at the president's regular White House Cabinet meeting with his most senior national security advisers after he expressed significant concern about the deepening crisis, which not only threatens lives but is also the reason for worsening civil violence.

"We are in a process right now of looking at ways to meet some of the ongoing food needs of certain countries beyond what has already been provided," White House spokeswoman Dana Perino said April 14. "The president has raised the issue with his national security advisers and he's asked that the State Department and USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] look at what can be done in the near term."

Relief goods from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are unloaded from a cargo plane. (© AP Images)

The White House noted that the United States is the largest provider of general food aid, providing more than $2.1 billion for 2.5 million metric tons of commodities to 78 developing countries in 2007. "We are also the world's largest provider for emergency food assistance, delivering 1.5 million metric tons of emergency food aid valued at $1.2 billion to 30 countries in 2007," it said in a statement.

U.S. emergency food assistance helped almost 23 million people, the White House said.

"The United States Agency for International Development has sought to invest in agricultural production in developing countries as a major strategy for increased food availability. Working through local institutions and partners, USAID has introduced new policy and technology-adapting capabilities to address near- and longer-term issues," the White House statement says.

MULTIPLE CAUSES

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization attributes rising global food prices to a combination of factors, including reduced production because of climate change, historically low levels of food stocks, higher consumption of meat and dairy products in emerging economies, increased demand for biofuels

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Bush Orders $200 Million for Emergency Food Relief . . .

(Continued from page 12)

production, drought and the higher cost of energy and transportation.

The price for a barrel of oil rose to $113 April 15 on world commodity markets. The price has risen 18 percent since the beginning of 2008.

Over the weekend, Group of Seven finance ministers and central bankers meeting in Washington called for immediate action to deal with the rising food prices.

"The problem is very serious around the world, due to severe price rises, and we have seen riots in Egypt, Cameroon, Haiti and Burkina Faso," says Jacques Diouf, director-general of the United Nations' Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). "There is a risk that this unrest will spread in countries where 50 [percent] to 60 percent of income goes to food."

The FAO also has reported incidents of civil unrest in Indonesia, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania, Mozambique, Bolivia, Senegal, the Philippines and Uzbekistan over food prices.

On April 12 the Haitian Senate fired Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis after more than a week of food riots. The government of President René Préval had convinced rioters to end civil strife stemming from higher food prices, but not before rioters had looted government warehouses and used rocks to attack shops, according to news reports.

According to U.N. officials, the price of staples such as rice, beans, fruit and condensed milk has gone up 50 percent in the past year, while the cost of pasta has more than doubled in Haiti. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged donor countries to provide emergency aid.

"The rapidly escalating crisis of food availability around the world has reached emergency proportions. The World Bank has indicated that the doubling of food prices over the last three years could push 100 million people in low-income countries deeper into poverty," Ban said April 14 at a special meeting of the U.N. Economic and Social Council.

"The international community will also need to take urgent and concerted action in order to avert the larger political and security implications of this growing crisis," Ban said.

The Washington-based World Bank estimates that 33 countries face civil unrest because of rising food and energy prices. In March, the World Food Programme (WFP) launched an appeal for an additional $500 million to respond to dramatic increases in global food and fuel prices, which have risen by 55 percent since June 2007. The WFP says it has received only 13 percent, or $12.4 million, of the $96 million necessary to assist Haiti.

"The United States, the European Union, Japan and other OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] countries must act now to fill this gap -- or many more people will suffer and starve," World Bank President Robert Zoellick said in a recent speech. "Food policy needs to gain the attention of the highest political levels, because no one country or group can meet these interconnected challenges."

According to the World Bank, from early 2006 to early 2008 global wheat prices have risen at least 180 percent and have now risen more since then.

"This perfect storm has hit with a speed and intensity that very few predicted," Michael Usnick, director of U.S. relations at the World Food Programme, says.

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

Bush Administration Seeks $37 Billion To Bolster Diplomacy

By David I. McKeeby
Staff Writer

Washington -- President Bush is seeking more than $37 billion from Congress in fiscal year 2009 spending to strengthen U.S. diplomacy by helping countries build democracy, recover from conflicts and improve lives and livelihoods by confronting disease and poverty.

The White House's FY 2009 foreign operations budget currently under review by Congress includes $22.7 billion for foreign operations and U.S. Agency for International Development programs, $3.15 billion in foreign economic support and $11.4 billion in administrative costs. The final amount approved by Congress is likely to be smaller, and will serve as the initial foreign affairs budget for the next president after the November 2008 elections.

In April 9 testimony before members of a Senate Appropriations subcommittee, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice outlined the administration's request to support key U.S. diplomatic priorities and bolster reconstruction and development efforts worldwide.

MIDEAST PEACE, IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN

Supporting the Middle East peace process is a top U.S. priority, and the budget request includes $100 million in aid for Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including $25 million to help the Palestinian Authority enact reforms and meet peace process obligations; $24 million to strengthen governance and the justice system; $18 million to support new businesses; and $33 million for health, education and humanitarian services.

The White House also seeks $469 million to help Iraq build on improved security by training a new generation of Iraqi leaders to provide services to their communities, support government reforms and promote new economic opportunities for Iraqi farmers and entrepreneurs. An additional $75 million will go toward helping Iraqis continue to develop their legal system, while $20 million in additional funds will pay for land-mine removal and counterterrorism programs.

Many challenges remain in Afghanistan as well, and the president is requesting $1.05 billion in aid to support that country's recovery, including $370 million for counter-narcotics efforts, $248 million to train and support the government, $109 million for health and education, $226 million for economic growth, $74 million to support the Provincial Reconstruction Teams and $12 million in food aid.

The Bush administration is also requesting $826 million in aid for Pakistan. The money is aimed at enhancing stability through strengthened democracy, expanded economic opportunity and better health and education programs.

The experience in post-conflict states such as Afghanistan and Iraq has shown the need for a wide array of expertise in fields as diverse as finance and law, education, agriculture and construction, says Rice. A new $251 million Civilian Stabilization Initiative will bring together experts from across the U.S. government and the private sector to build a team of non-military volunteers who will bring help and hope to communities.

The United States values its allies, says Rice, and the White House seeks $1.53 billion to pay assessed contributions to 47 international organizations, including the United Nations. This is in addition to $1.497 billion in U.S. contributions toward U.N. peacekeeping missions, including ongoing efforts in Lebanon, Haiti, Liberia and the Congo, as well as new missions in Darfur and Chad.

An additional $247.2 million will fund training and deployment of international peacekeepers through programs such as the Global Peace Operations Initiative, African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance and the Multinational Force and Observers peacekeeping mission in the Sinai.

AID AND TRADE

Humanitarian aid, economic development and trade agreements are also important elements in America's overall strategy to promote peace and security. The budget request includes $2.25 billion for the Millennium Challenge Corporation to help eligible states develop and implement programs to alleviate poverty, improve healthcare and promote economic opportunity. An additional $1.63 billion is slated for development programs in Africa, the Western Hemisphere and the Middle East.
The administration requested an additional $764 million to aid refugees and resettle displaced people through contributions to nongovernmental humanitarian assistance groups. An additional $45 million aimed toward Iraqi and Afghan refugees will be requested late in the year. ♦

Rising Global Food Prices Likely to Continue, Say Experts

By Merle D. Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington –- Sharply rising costs for food staples and fuel are leading to deadly clashes in impoverished countries and likely will continue for some time, say international experts.

"The problem is very serious around the world due to severe price rises and we have seen riots in Egypt, Cameroon, Haiti and Burkina Faso," says Jacques Diouf, director-general of the U.N.'s Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). "There is a risk that this unrest will spread in countries where 50 to 60 percent of income goes to food."

The FAO attributes rising food prices to a combination of factors, including reduced production due to climate change, historically low levels of food stocks, higher consumption of meat and dairy products in emerging economies, increased demand for biofuels production, drought and the higher cost of energy and transportation.

Diouf said at a major conference in New Delhi April 9 that world food prices have risen 45 percent in the last nine months and that there are severe shortages of rice, wheat and maize (corn). The FAO also has reported incidents of civil unrest in Indonesia, Cote de'Ivoire, Mauritania, Mozambique, Bolivia, Senegal and Uzbekistan over food prices.

The Washington-based World Bank estimates 33 countries face social unrest because of rising food and energy prices.

"The United States, the European Union, Japan and other OECD [Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development] countries must act now to fill this gap -- or many more people will suffer and starve," World Bank President Robert Zoellick said in a recent speech. "Food policy needs to gain the attention of the highest political levels, because no one country or group can meet these interconnected challenges."

The United States remains the world's largest contributor of global food aid. The U.S. Agency for International Development operates the 54-year-old Food for Peace program to provide humanitarian food assistance to developing countries. In the fiscal year 2008 federal budget, the United States appropriated more than $1.4 billion for food aid programs. And the U.S. Agriculture Department and USAID are hosting their 10th annual International Food Aid Conference in Kansas City, Missouri, April 14-16 to address many of the more dire food shortage issues that have begun emerging in recent weeks across the globe. (See "Kansas City, Missouri, to Host International Food Aid Conference (http://www.america.gov/st/foraid-english/2008/April/20080409115517AKllennoCcM0.6175305.html?CP.rss=true).")

President Bush has asked Congress for an additional $350 million supplemental appropriation to cover help for the Darfur region in Sudan and other needy areas.

In the recent case of unrest in Haiti, U.N. peacekeepers began removing barricades from around the presidential palace April 10 as calm began returning to the country's capital of Port-au-Prince and streets were being cleaned of debris following three days of violence and looting, all stemming from higher food prices. Rioters looted government warehouses and used rocks to attack shops, according to news reports. According to U.N. officials, the price of staples such as rice,

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Rising Global Food Prices Likely to Continue, Say Experts . . .

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beans, fruit and condensed milk has gone up 50 percent in the past year, while the cost of pasta has more than doubled in Haiti. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged donor countries to provide emergency aid.

The World Food Program (WFP) appealed to the international community for urgent funds to support its operations in Haiti. "Riots in Haiti underline the additional need for lifesaving food assistance," WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran said April 7. "At this critical time, we need to stand with the people of Haiti and other countries hardest hit by rising food prices."

In March, WFP launched an appeal for an additional $500 million to respond to dramatic increases in global food and fuel prices, which have risen by 55 percent since June 2007. The WFP says it has received only 13 percent, or $12.4 million, of the $96 million necessary to assist the 1.7 million people of Haiti.

"What we see in Haiti is what we're seeing in many of our operations around the world –- rising prices that mean less food for the hungry. A new face of hunger is emerging: even where food is available on the shelves, there are now more and more people who simply can not afford it," Sheeran says.
In Egypt, the government granted bonuses to workers after two days of riots over rising food costs and declining wages. "The security implications should also not be underestimated as food riots are already being reported across the globe," John Holmes, chief of U.N. humanitarian operations, told the Associated Press April 8.

A World Bank report said that global wheat prices increased 181 percent over the 36 months leading up to February 2008, and overall global food prices increased by 83 percent from a year ago.

"Food crop prices are expected to remain high in 2008 and 2009 and then begin to decline, but they are likely to remain well above the 2004 levels through 2015 for most food crops," the World Bank report said.

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Americans "Celebrate" Tax Day . . .

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directly into taxpayers' bank accounts rather than paid by paper checks.

TAXATION SYSTEM "INSPIRES" WIT AND WISDOM

Americans' love-hate relationship with its system of taxation also has been an inspiration to generations of pundits, politicians, philosophers and wits, with many of their sayings – from the lofty to the acerbic -- becoming mainstays of the culture.

Constitutional draftsman Benjamin Franklin reflected back in 1789, long before adoption of the federal income tax, that "our new Constitution is now established, and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who held office from 1933 to 1945, said, "Taxes, after all, are dues we pay for the privileges of membership in an organized society."

U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, who served on the court from 1902 to 1932, said, "I like to pay taxes. With them I buy civilization."

On the less lofty level, Erwin Griswold, the U.S. government's lead lawyer before the U.S. Supreme Court from 1967-1973, said: "We have long had death and taxes as the two standards of inevitability. But there are those who believe that death is the preferable of the two. 'At least,' as one man said, 'there's one advantage about death; it doesn't get worse every time Congress meets.'"

And from comedian Paula Poundstone: "The wages of sin are death, but after they take taxes out, it's more like a tired feeling, really."

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Washington's "Newseum" Promotes Free Flow of Information

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington -- Washington's Newseum opens its doors to the public April 11 on the city's famous Pennsylvania Avenue, blocks from the U.S. Capitol. With a focus on journalism and the profession's impact throughout history, the Newseum is dedicated to helping its visitors broaden their understanding of the role of the media and the rights and responsibilities that come with freedom of expression.

Washington's Newseum shows visitors how important the free flow of information is to democracy. (State Dept./Stephen Kaufman)

Newseum President Peter Pritchard told journalists and guests at an April 8 preview of the museum that he hopes "visitors will come to the museum as tourists but leave as better informed citizens."

Despite a shift away from traditional media such as newspapers and radio, there are "enduring truths" about journalism that will continue to resonate with the public, Pritchard said, adding "the hunger for news and information has never been greater all around the world ... [and] democracy anywhere cannot exist without a free flow of information."

Among the Newseum's artifacts are sections of the Berlin Wall with a reconstructed guard tower, the ruins of a television antenna that was on top of one of New York's World Trade Center towers and the walking stick of Cameroonian journalist and press freedom advocate Pius Njawé, who has been arrested more than 125 times and imprisoned for printing material that Cameroon's government deemed inappropriate.

The museum also houses a memorial to 1,843 journalists from around the world who were killed between 1837 and 2007 while covering news events.
In addition, the $450 million project boasts 15 theaters and 14 galleries, complete with 23 hours of videos and 130 interactive elements. At the media preview, Newseum Chief Executive Officer Charles Overby described the end product as "the most technologically advanced museum ... [and] the most interactive museum in the world."
The museum hosts two television studios where visitors can watch as U.S. news programs such as ABC's This Week With George Stephanopoulos are produced, and even get video footage of themselves trying their hands at being a correspondent in front of the White House and other Washington landmarks. "We built this museum to inform, inspire and entertain people about a free press," Overby said.

MEDIA FAILURES AND TRIUMPHS

Some areas of the museum showcase situations in which the media has failed to accurately inform the public, highlighting episodes of inaccuracy, bias, misuse of sources, willful deception and other errors. At the same time, there are show-

The Newseum uses galleries and interactive exhibits to chronicle the history of journalism. (State Dept./Stephen Kaufman)

cases on media triumphs, such as the Washington Post's reporting on the 1972 Watergate burglary that ultimately exposed abuses of power by President Richard Nixon's administration.

Much of the Newseum focuses on American journalism and how the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees the freedom of the press as well as the freedoms of speech and religion, has enabled American journalists to do their job. However, Executive Director Joe Urschel said, the Newseum also looks at news "in a global sense" including galleries on freedom of the press around the world and a daily display of global newspapers.

Urschel said the gallery housing the 60-ton section of the Berlin Wall is meant to show how the former East German government imprisoned its citizens in their own country, but could not block the entry of news and information from the United States and Western Europe.

"[W]e believe that news and information fueled the Germans in their quest for freedom," he said. ♦

Former Child Soldier a Beacon of Hope to Conflict Survivors

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

"I believe children have the resilience to outlive their sufferings, if given a chance."
-- Ishmael Beah, from his book, A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier

Washington -- Ishmael Beah saw and did some horrible things during the civil war that wracked Sierra Leone -- all when he was just a young teen.

But with some support and good luck, he is now able to extend a helping hand to children who have been pressed into combat.

At age 12, Beah lost his family when the rebel army, known as the Revolutionary United Front, attacked his town. Running away from the carnage, he wandered the countryside for nearly a year with other frightened boys his age. Finally, he and his little group happened into a government army base and quickly were recruited as soldiers to fight the war.

Indoctrinated to believe he was defending his country and fed a combination of narcotics to make him fierce, he found that "killing became as easy as drinking water," he writes in his book, A Long Way Gone.

At 15 he was removed from the battlefields by UNICEF and rehabilitated in a facility run by a nongovernmental organization known as "Children Associated With the War." Eventually, he made his way to the United States, where he graduated from college and wrote his poignant memoirs, which received international acclaim.

Today, Beah, at 28, is the UNICEF advocate for children affected by war and travels the world to lobby for government and private support to rehabilitate and reintegrate former child soldiers into society.

Ishmael Beah

BEACONS OF HOPE

"People think once you go through this as a child, you're finished, you can't recover," Beah told America.gov. "That's not true."

With the proper care and support, former child combatants can live meaningful lives, he said.

Beah acknowledged he is among the luckiest and most publicly visible of these rehabilitation "success stories." But he emphasized: "I want people to know that it's not just me, that there are other people as well, so people [can] see the diversity of the success stories."

To this end, Beah said, he is working to form an association of former child soldiers who can speak publicly about how to help other victimized children and "serve as role models for young people who are coming out of this [recovery] process."

"Everyone heals differently," Beah said, adding that some would rather forget what they went through and not relive the horrors by talking about them.

Regarding his own terrible memories, Beah said: "Whether I speak about this or not, it will always come up in my head. It's part of my existence. My life is colored with those experiences. I've lived to transform them and live with them well. So, for me, if it's going to come up anyway, I might as well use it in a way that benefits all the people."

Beah said when he and fellow former child combatants talk among themselves, "it's not in sensationalist terms, [but] in terms not dwelling on the negative. ... Mostly, we're speaking about the transformative element of it."

He said he hopes to have his association of former child combatants ready to introduce to the public within the next few months.

MAJOR CHALLENGES

Commenting on his current work with UNICEF, Beah said that most governments that do not have to deal with child soldiers are not particularly interested in the issue. And governments or rebel groups

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Solar and Wind Resources Can Fuel the Future

By Lea Terhune
Staff Writer

Washington -- David Sandalow knows energy and the environment. As a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, he writes about both. His 2007 book Freedom from Oil discusses ways the United States can wean itself from oil.

"I think that clean energy is one of the greatest opportunities of our time," he told international participants in a March "Ask America" webchat.

"Wind power has tremendous potential to generate electricity," he said, adding that it is a fast-growing power source around the world. "In many places, wind power costs no more than dirtier sources of power. People everywhere can benefit by exploring opportunities for wind power."

Sun, wind and water are rich resources that the right technologies can turn into electricity. Organic waste, or biomass, likewise may provide fuel that replaces greenhouse gas-emitting fossil fuels such as coal and petroleum.

"I would recommend bringing solar and wind power to every city and village in the nation," he said in response to a question from Pakistan. "Pakistan can skip over some of the dirty industrial practices of the 20th century and build a modern, 21st century energy infrastructure using decentralized sources of power such as the sun and wind." He added that multilateral financial institutions should participate accomplishing this.

Developed countries have put the brakes on old energy infrastructure.

David Sandalow (Brookings Institution)

"In the United States and many other countries, construction of new coal-fired power plants has slowed dramatically because of concerns about global warming. During the decades ahead, the world's energy systems will increasingly come from renewable power," he said.

He told the group that many U.S. cities have embraced Kyoto Protocol targets independently. "Major U.S.-based companies such as General Electric and Wal-Mart have taken important steps to become part of the solution."

Sandalow predicted that some form of legislation limiting U.S. greenhouse gas emissions will be enacted by 2009 or 2010 because presidential candidates from both Democratic and Republican parties support it.

He said the clean-energy industry is one of expanding opportunities and encouraged students to consider it for career opportunities. People with many different backgrounds and skills will be needed "to bring clean energy to billions of people around the world," he said -- engineers, business people, technicians, farmers and political leaders, among others.

"Renewable energy sources produce much less pollution and global warming gases than other sources of energy. For example, substituting solar or wind power for power from fossil fuels is an essential part of the solution to the global warming problem. Renewable energy is especially important for villages without connections to electric grid. For such villages, solar and wind power can often bring electricity cheaper and with much less pollution than fossil fuels," Sandalow said.

Sandalow is enthusiastic about plug-in electric cars. He drives one. "We all grew up with cars that use only one fuel -- oil. But it doesn't need to be that way. Technology is available today to produce cars that run on electricity. ... These electric cars are a great way to use renewable energy technologies -- such as solar and wind power -- to power our vehicle fleets."

In response to questions, he said both China and India have set "aggressive goals" for improving energy efficiency, adding "China will play a central role in the world's transition to clean energy." India has "enormous renewable energy resources" which he thinks "will grow very rapidly in the decades ahead."

Regarding the United States, Sandalow said, "Fortunately the energy efficiency of the U.S. economy has been improving for several decades, but there are still many ways to save money and energy." ♦

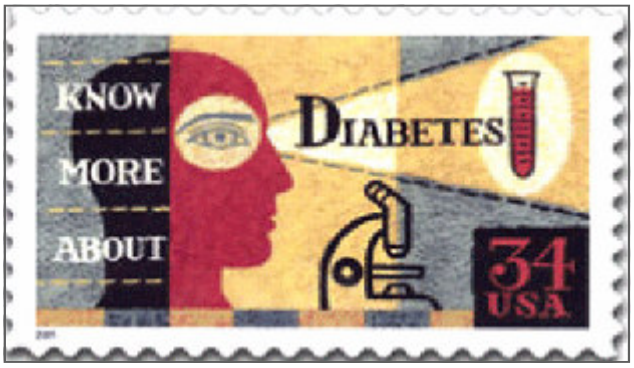
Diabetes Threatens Lives Worldwide

By Melody Merin
Special Correspondent

Washington -- Without effective countermeasures, one chronic disease is projected to cause 50 percent more deaths in 2015 than it did in 2006 -- 80 percent more in affluent nations -- according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Diabetes, which WHO estimates causes about 5 percent of all deaths globally each year, affects 246 million people worldwide. It likely will affect 380 million by 2025, says the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), a worldwide alliance of diabetes associations in more than 160 countries.

In the United States, 20.8 million people have diabetes, 6.2 million of them not yet diagnosed. In 2007 the United States joined India, China, Russia and Germany as one of the nations with the largest numbers of diabetics.



A U.S. postage stamp promotes diabetes awareness.

Diabetes is marked by high levels of blood glucose (sugar) resulting from the body's inability to produce or properly use insulin, a hormone that helps convert sugar into energy.

Type 1 diabetes usually is diagnosed in children or young adults. Those with type 1 cannot produce insulin and must treat their condition with insulin delivered by injection or an implanted pump.

Type 2 diabetes accounts for about 90 to 95 percent of all diagnosed cases of diabetes and most often occurs in adults over 40. Type 2, which occurs when the body stops producing enough insulin, can be treated with diet, exercise and, if necessary, oral medications.

A finger-prick test helps diabetics monitor glucose levels. (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

Over time, diabetes can harm internal organs and lead to complications -- heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, blindness, kidney failure, amputations, nervous system damage, sexual dysfunction and death related to flu or pneumonia.

These complications contribute to ballooning health care costs. In the United States in 2007, the cost of treating diabetes and its complications totaled $174 billion, according to the American Diabetes Association. WHO estimates that China will lose $558 billion in national income from 2006 to 2015 as the result of heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

TREATABLE, PREVENTABLE

Despite the statistics, many health and medical experts believe good information and proper care can allow people with diabetes or those at increased risk of developing the disease to lead long, healthy lives. Research also suggests that diabetes, like many chronic diseases, can be prevented.

An ongoing international research project on the environmental determinants of diabetes in the young (the TEDDY study) focuses on type 1 diabetes. The project aims to identify environmental factors that trigger type 1 diabetes. This study involves six groups of researchers in the United States, German y, Sweden and Finland who follow children at a genetically higher-than-average risk for diabetes.

"Finding out more about these events and how they act together will lead to a better understanding of how type 1 diabetes develops and how to prevent, slow down or reverse the disease," according to TEDDY's Web site.

A 2007 study conducted by a team

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Former Child Soldier a Beacon of Hope to Conflict Survivors . . .

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that use children "don't want to talk about it much, because they don't want to show that their human rights record is horrible because they are allowing children to be used."

Leaders responsible for child soldiers should face justice, Beah urged. "You cannot prosecute everyone who had anything to do with the war," he said. "But you have to go after the orchestrators, the 'big fish,' the people who really knew what this would do to the society and did it."

Prosecuting these leaders "sets a precedent that if you do this, there is nowhere you can hide in the world, that people come after you,"

Child Soldiers in Congo

Beah said. "The International Criminal Court is trying to do that, to a large extent, but we need more support."

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Beah recommends that individuals or groups interested in helping former child combatants "take time to find out what it is that you can actually do to help somebody, as opposed to being a 'blind giver.'"

Individuals with specific skills -- such as guidance counseling or psychological care -- can find ways to work with former child combatants seeking to live normal lives.

"Make it genuine and personal," Beah said. "That's the only way you can do something sustainable."

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Diabetes Threatens Lives Worldwide . . .

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of U.S. and Finnish researchers and two other groups examined the link between genes and diabetes. The study found at least four new genetic variants related to increased diabetes risk and confirmed the existence of another six variants.

"This achievement represents a major milestone in our battle against diabetes. It will accelerate efforts to understand the genetic risk factors for this disease, as well as explore how these genetic factors interact with each other and with lifestyle factors," Dr. Elias Zerhouni, director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), said in a statement.

At the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a five-year study, "SEARCH for Diabetes in Youth," aims to examine diabetes in U.S. children and adolescents.

Dr. Giuseppina Imperatore, in the Division of Diabetes Translation at the CDC, said the ongoing study, co-funded by NIH, focuses on children with all types of diabetes. The study's primary goals include the following:

developing a uniform classification of types of childhood diabetes;

estimating the number of new and existing cases by type, age, gender and race or ethnic group;

identifying the clinical characteristics of different types of diabetes and how they evolved;

describing complications of diabetes in the young; and

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describing the quality of life of children and adolescents with diabetes.

Programs that target type 2 diabetes address prevention and management. Joan Chamberlain of the Office of Communications and Public Liaison at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) cites the National Diabetes Education Program's Small Steps. Big Rewards. Prevent type 2 Diabetes., a national diabetes prevention campaign aimed at "reaching high-risk audiences to inform them that type 2 diabetes can be prevented by increasing physical activity and lowering caloric intake." The campaign arose from a Diabetes Prevention Program study that showed that people at increased risk for type 2 diabetes can prevent or delay its onset by losing 5 percent to 7 percent of their body weight through increased exercise and dietary changes.

More information on diabetes-related research and treatment programs can be found at the Web sites of the NIDDK (http://www2.niddk.nih.gov/) and the CDC (http://www.cdc.gov/Diabetes/about/index.htm).

Additional information on TEDDY (http://www.uchsc.edu/misc/diabetes/Teddy/TEDDY/AboutT1DM.htm) and SEARCH (http://www.searchfordiabetes.org/) is available on Web sites maintained by those projects.

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America Savors Its Music During Jazz Appreciation Month . . .

(Continued from page 11)

strong House (http://www.satchmo.net/) offers tours and a small gift shop.

Ragtime. This syncopated, quintessentially piano music is one of the roots of jazz. A small display of artifacts from Scott Joplin, "The King of Ragtime Writers," is at the State Fair Community College in Sedalia, Missouri — the town where Joplin composed his famous Maple Leaf Rag. Sedalia hosts the annual Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival. In much larger St. Louis, you can visit one of Joplin's homes, the Scott Joplin House (http://www.mostateparks.com/scottjoplin.htm) State Historic Site.

Blues. The twelve-bar blues is arguably the only musical form created wholly in the United States, and the state of Mississippi often is considered the birthplace of the blues. Certainly the state produced many leading blues musicians, including Charley Patton, Robert Johnson, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and B.B. King. Most came out of the broad floodplain known as the Mississippi Delta, which runs 322 kilometers along the Mississippi River from Memphis, Tennessee, south to Vicksburg, Mississippi. This part of Mississippi boasts three modest blues museums: the Delta Blues Museum (http://www.deltabluesmuseum.org/) in Clarksdale, the Blues & Legends Hall of Fame Museum (http://www.bluesmuseum.org/) in Robinsonville and the Highway 61 Blues Museum (http://www.highway61blues.com/) located in Leland. ♦

Big Chief Monk Boudreaux performs during the 2006 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. (© AP Images)