



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

USAID Donates Vehicles to Strengthen Health Training Program

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on Wednesday, January 17, 2007 officially hand over 20 new vehicles to the Ministry of Health tomorrow. The Toyota Land Cruisers, worth more than US \$500,000, will be used to transport health officer university students and their instructors to and from twenty training hospitals located in the Tigray, Amhara, Oromiya, and

SNNPR regions. "Health officers receiving pre-service training will now be able to reach training hospitals and health centers in some of the most remote areas of Ethiopia. This exchange will improve the training of health officers and the quality of health services of rural communities. USAID is proud to be a part of that accomplishment," USAID/Ethiopia Mission Director Glenn Anders said. During the

ceremony, Mr. Anders handed over the keys to one of the new vehicles to His Excellency Dr. Kebede Worku, State Minister of Health. The ceremony took place at the Ministry of Health garage facility in Addis Ababa.

The vehicle donation supports the Ethiopian Public Health Training Initiative, which is improving the skills of front line health workers through en-

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"Landmarks of New York" Photo Exhibition Opens in Addis Ababa City Hall

A photo exhibition entitled "Landmarks of New York" organized by the U.S. Embassy opened at the Theater Exhibition Hall of Addis Ababa City Administration on January 11, 2007. Over 75 people attended the opening event including the Mayor of Addis Ababa, Ato Berhanu Deressa. Dr. Rosemary Curran,



Patricia Johnson, Cultural Affairs Officer of the U.S. Embassy, speaks at the opening.

Fulbright scholar at Addis Ababa University, presented a personal view of New York City. Cultural Affairs Specialist Yo-hannes Birhanu discussed the four projects which the U.S. Embassy has assisted through the Ambassa-

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hanced training programs at Ethiopian universities. The health initiative began out of a conversation between Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter about how The Carter Center could help build the capacity of Ethiopia. They agreed that the health science facilities in Ethiopian

universities needed to be strengthened.

Since 2000, USAID/Ethiopia has awarded The Carter Center more than US \$12 million to develop improved health officers curriculum, enhance the teaching and learning environment, and train university instructors in pedagogical skills and drought health response. The

Ethiopian Public Health Training Initiative now covers seven universities.

The teaching and learning environment, especially within the universities, has improved markedly because of the Ethiopian Public Health Training Initiative. Over 3,000 health officers will graduate from the program by 2008. ♦

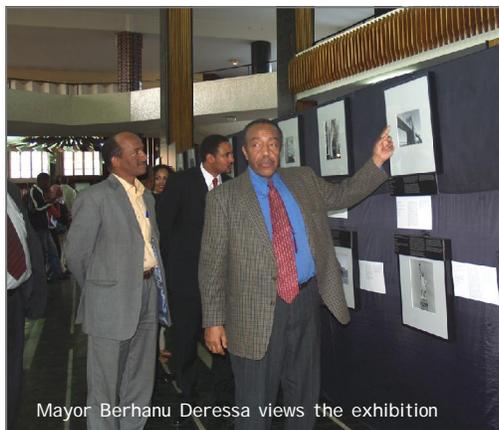
“Landmarks of New York” Photo Exhibition Opens in Addis Ababa City Hall . . .

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dor’s Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP).

Addis Woubet, an Ethiopian NGO dedicated to preserving the historic landmarks of Addis Ababa, gave a power point presentation on their visions for preserving the cultural landmarks of Addis Ababa. Cultural Affairs Officer Patricia Johnson discussed the recent history of the cultural preservation in the US. Following the presentations, Mayor Berhanu asked to speak on New York City, as he, too, considered himself a New Yorker.

The attendees expressed pleasure with the knowledge that Addis Ababa, too, had cultural landmarks worth preserving that showed Addis Ababa’s and Ethiopia’s development as a capital city and modern nation. They were also pleased to learn about US efforts through the AFCP to support the preservation of Ethiopia’s cultural heritage.



Mayor Berhanu Deressa views the exhibition

In his speech, Mayor Berhanu pledged support to Addis Woubet for its efforts to preserve the cultural patrimony of Addis Ababa. He said that Addis Woubet had a sympathetic ear in the City Administration for its preservation projects. According to the Mayor, Addis Ababa could, by itself, become a tourist destination, not just a jumping off point for other tourist destinations in

Ethiopia. Attendees included guests from government and non-government organizations, cultural establishments, universities and other educational institutions. ♦



Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and the Ethiopian American Business Community Association Host Lunch for USTR delegation

Members of a delegation from the United States Trade Representative (USTR) were the guests of honor at a lunch hosted by the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and the Ethiopian American Business Community Association, on January 17th. U.S. Ambassador Don Yamamoto delivered welcome remarks along with the Chairman of the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce, Ato Eyesus-work Zafu. Florizelle Liser, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Africa gave the keynote speech that explained some of the ways in which Ethiopia can increase its participation in the global economy. Ms. Liser leads U.S. trade efforts in sub-Saharan Africa and oversees implementation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).



Ambassador Yamamoto speaking at the lunch



(L-R) William Jackson (USTR), Florizelle Liser, Ato Eyesuswork Zafu and Ambassador Yamamoto at the lunch.

U.S. Military Improves Water Systems for Djibouti Children

"I identify the needs and try to use whatever assets we have here to make an impact on the people," U.S. Army civil affairs specialist Justin Lockhart said of his work with the joint military task force assigned to the Horn of Africa.

Members of the task force recently participated in water system improvements at Djibouti City schools. It is one of many activities with nations in the region to improve the quality of life for residents.

One of the facilities to benefit was the Gulleh Batel primary school.

"Replacing the cracked water tank was our main focus at Gulleh Batel," said the Army's Gary Robinson. "This project will protect the kids by giving them a healthier environment. It will help to prevent the spread of disease." The project was a partnership between the task force, the local community and the nongovernmental organization Save the Children, he said.

"By fixing the latrines, you have cooperation with [the] local school and family members that see the impact that the U.S. military is trying to make," Lockhart said. "They understand that we have a genuine concern for the welfare of their children. The parents are always willing to help and appreciate what we do. The children love to see us. We always strive to make a good impression with the kids because one day they grow up and have memories, and hopefully we left positive ones."

Lockhart regularly visits schools around Djibouti to assess plumbing and sanitation conditions and determine which schools have the greatest need for sanitation renovation.

The schools' needs range from small repairs to complete overhauls. Some schools do not have any running water.

Sanitation and plumbing issues are important to prevent the spread of disease, particularly when flooding

occurs, Lockhart said.

Djibouti City experienced a serious cholera outbreak in 2002 and 2003 following rains similar to the ones seen during the end of 2006, said the Army's Benjamin Sklaver, a civil affairs team leader. "Providing clean water and sanitation for schoolchildren is essential to prevent another outbreak," he said.

The mission of Horn of Africa joint task force is to promote regional stability and thwart extremism. It works with partner nations on humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and civic action programs, including providing medical and veterinary care, school and medical clinic construction assistance and water development projects.

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

Americans Celebrate Achievements of Martin Luther King Jr.

By Michael Jay Friedman, Washington File Staff Writer

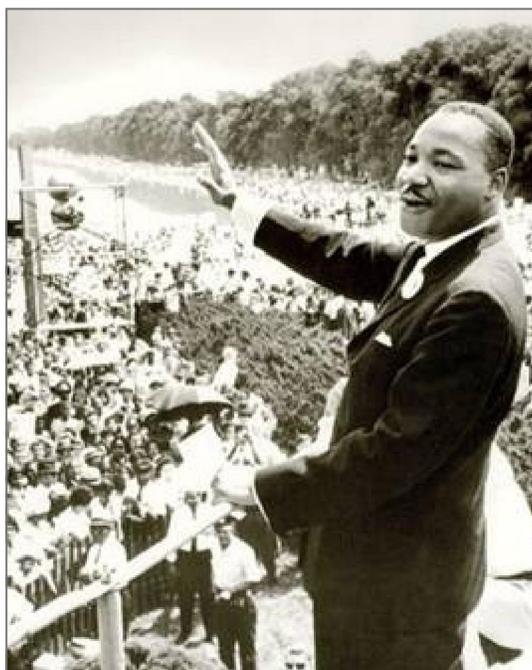
On the third Monday of January Americans honor the life and achievements of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. (January 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968), the 1964 Nobel Peace laureate and the individual most associated with the triumphs of the African-American civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s.

As political organizer, supremely skilled orator and advocate of nonviolent protest, King was pivotal in persuading his fellow Americans to end the legal segregation that prevailed throughout the South and parts of other regions, and in sparking support for the civil rights legislation that established the legal framework for racial equality in the United States.

King was among those champions of justice whose influence transcended national boundaries. A student of the philosophy and principles of nonviolence enunciated by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), King in 1959 traveled to India, where he studied further the legacy of the man his widow, Coretta Scott King, later would call his “political mentor.” Nelson Mandela, accepting the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize, similarly credited King as his predecessor in the effort to resolve justly the issues of racism and human dignity.

Son of the prominent Atlanta pastor Martin Luther King Sr., King at the age of 26 completed a doctorate in theology at Boston University. In 1954, while completing his dissertation, King accepted the pastorate at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. It

was in Montgomery the following year that Rosa Parks, an African-American seamstress, was jailed for refusing to give up her seat on a segregated municipal bus to a white passenger. The incident sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott, in which the city’s African-Americans refused to patronize its segregated bus system. King led the organiza-



tion directing the boycott and became the movement’s public face, appealing to white Americans’ spirit of brotherhood. When the federal courts, following the reasoning of the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, declared the bus segregation law unconstitutional, King emerged as a national figure.

South African Archbishop and civil rights champion Desmond Tutu acknowledges King’s influence on his thought. (© AP Images)

In 1957, King was among the founders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). This was

an alliance of black ministers and churches organized to pursue non-violent direct action against segregation. SCLC leaders hoped to change public opinion and to complement the legal challenges to segregation pursued by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). King was a dynamic force within the SCLC, emerging as its leading fundraiser and as a skillful political tactician who successfully forged alliances with sympathetic Northern whites. In 1959, King traveled to India, where he met with followers of Gandhi and further refined his thought on nonviolent social protest.

During the early 1960s, King and the SCLC initiated a number of peaceful protests against segregated institutions. In May 1963, Birmingham, Alabama, Police Commissioner Eugene “Bull” Connor unleashed police dogs and high-pressure fire hoses against peaceful demonstrators, many of them schoolchildren. The images horrified the nation. King was arrested during these demonstrations and from his jail cell produced the Letter From a Birmingham Jail, in which he argued that one who breaks an unjust law to arouse the consciousness of his community “is in reality expressing the highest respect for law,” provided he acts “openly, lovingly and with a willingness to accept the penalty.” That August, African-American leaders organized the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Here, before an estimated quarter million civil rights supporters gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, King offered one of the most powerful orations in American history. Generations of schoolchildren have learned

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Congressional Caucuses Help Draw Attention to Specific Issues

By Michelle Austein
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- In both the House of Representatives and the Senate, members often organize informally into groups based on their shared interest on an issue. Many of these 200 such groups, known as caucuses, help shape legislation passed by the U.S. Congress. The term "caucus" refers to both the group and the meeting it holds.

Standing congressional committees must work on a wide-range of issues, but caucuses can narrow their focus to a specific topic and significantly affect public perceptions and legislative priorities.

For example, in recent months the Congressional Human Rights Caucus has brought attention on specific human rights issues through briefings with experts on the rights of the disabled, religious freedom protections, human rights abuses in Vietnam, anti-conversion laws in the Middle East and humanitarian crises in Sudan and Uganda. The caucus also heard testimony from those who have survived human rights abuses. Members of the caucus have worked with other nations to achieve the release of political prisoners.

The bipartisan Sudan Caucus was formed in October 2005 to encourage people to do what they can to help end the violence in the Darfur region of Sudan. The caucus has encouraged state governments to divest from companies doing business in Sudan, and submitted and secured passage of a House resolution supporting the appointment of a presidential special envoy for Su-

dan with a mandate to deter further escalation of violence and humanitarian disaster. Caucus members have spoken at rallies to draw public attention to Darfur. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=October&x=200510251509011E-JrehsiFO.6849024>).)

Some caucuses, such the Blue Dog Coalition and the Congressional Black Caucus, are likely to play a prominent role in the 110th Congress.



U.S. Congress building

The Blue Dog Coalition is a group of 44 conservative and moderate Democrats who tend to vote together. The leadership of the 110th Congress already is listening to and taking actions recommended by the Blue Dog Coalition, said Representative Mike Ross of Arkansas during a January 5 press conference. Additionally, seven members of the caucus are on the House Appropriations Committee, a powerful panel that controls the federal budget.

The Congressional Black Caucus has played an influential role in U.S. politics since its founding in 1969 and is expected to continue to do

so. Many of the 43 caucus members lead or hold prominent positions on standing committees and subcommittees.

ORIGIN, ROLES OF THE POLITICAL CAUCUS

Party caucuses were established in the House in 1800 to help select nominees for president and vice president, a function that that has been taken over by national party conventions.

In the 21st century, each major political party holds regular House and Senate caucuses for discussions of party goals, strategies and views on legislation. At the meetings held at the beginning of a new Congress, members vote for their party leaders and committee chairs. Leaders may encourage, but cannot require, caucus participants to vote a certain way on an issue. Once a congressional term is under way, caucuses focus on designing and implementing legislative strategy.

Party caucuses in the House of Representatives are called the House Republican Conference and the House Democratic Caucus. The Senate has the Senate Democratic Conference and the Senate Republican Conference.

Most members of Congress also belong to other caucuses, or unofficial organizations formed to represent and promote certain interests. Such groups deal with a wide range of issues, including regional, ethnic, economic, cultural and very specific topics. These groups can draft legislation, request hearings, lobby officials or take other actions to promote their causes.

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Congressional Leaders Pledge Bipartisan Immigration Reform Effort

By Jeffrey Thomas
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- When the new 110th Congress convened January 4, the Senate leadership made a bipartisan commitment to tackle comprehensive immigration reform, picking up a theme sounded by President Bush in May 2006.

Harry Reid, a Democrat from Nevada and the new Senate majority leader, announced immigration reform is one of his party's top 10 legislative priorities in this Congress. "Our borders remain unsecured," said Reid in his first speech to the Senate January 4. "Our laws remain underenforced. And we have 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the shadows."

He said the Democrats would propose legislation that will "take a comprehensive approach to repairing this broken system. With tough and smart reforms, it will secure our borders, crack down on enforcement, and lay out a path to earned legalization for undocumented immigrants already living here."

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Republican from Kentucky, said immigration is "one of the most pressing issues of our day. We should be daring about immigration reform -- and act on it soon."

Legal immigration to the United States has grown substantially in recent decades -- from 3.3 million in the 1960s to 9.1 million in the 1990s -- and Mexicans constitute by far the largest immigrant group, according to the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. The State Department reports that between 2000 and 2005, 3.7 million



New Senate majority leader Harry Reid says Democrats will propose "tough and smart" immigration reforms.

immigrants became citizens and the United States granted legal permanent residence to 5.8 million people.

Estimates of the number of illegal immigrants in the United States vary widely. The Pew Hispanic Center, a nonpartisan research group, calculates an unauthorized population of 11.5 to 12 million as of March 2006, based on Census Bureau and other data.

According to Gordon Hanson of the University of California-San Diego, a leading scholar on illegal migration who spoke January 8 at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, some estimates go as high as 20 million, but no one really knows the exact figure. Hanson supports estimates of approximately 11 million illegal immigrants, with 6.2 million coming from Mexico.

Over the past 15 years, Hanson said, enforcement spending by the

Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Customs and Border Protection has increased fivefold without any appreciable effect on the annual net inflow of illegal immigrants from Mexico, which he estimated at 300,000 per year. This illegal immigration is driven primarily by the large gap in relative income between Mexico and the United States, he said, but migration networks also play a role, with earlier arrivals helping later ones.

Immediately after the 2006 midterm elections shifted control of key subcommittees on immigration from the Republicans to the Democrats, Bush expressed optimism about the prospects for comprehensive immigration reform in 2007. "I think we have a good chance," he said November 8. "It's an important issue and I hope we can get something done on it."

Steny Hoyer of Maryland, the new majority leader of the House of Representatives, said January 7 that Bush has told Democratic leaders he expects to have "a lot easier time" dealing with them on immigration than he had with the previous House Republican leadership.

Some of the Republican lawmakers who favored a "get-tough" policy rather than immigration reform were defeated in the November 2006 elections, but comprehensive immigration reform still will require bipartisan compromise, particularly on the issues of a guest-worker program and a route to a legal immigration status for unauthorized immigrants.

Senator Patrick Leahy takes over as chair of the Judiciary Committee, while Senator Edward Kennedy, a

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Congressional Leaders Pledge Bipartisan Immigration Reform Effort . . .

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strong supporter of immigration reform, heads the immigration subcommittee. In the House, John Conyers chairs the Judiciary Committee, while the chair of the immigration subcommittee has not yet been named.

But even though the Democrats won a majority in both houses of Congress in November 2006, their majority is razor-thin in the Senate (51-49). Moreover, any legislation requires Bush's approval unless both houses of Congress can override his veto by a two-thirds major-

ity, a virtual impossibility on this issue.

Bush long has promoted his strategy to enhance U.S. homeland security through comprehensive immigration reform, but Republican opposition frustrated efforts to address any but the border-security aspects of the issue during the 109th Congress. In signing the Secure Fence Act of 2006, the president characterized the bill's authorization of the construction of hundreds of miles of additional fencing along the U.S. southern border and other security measures designed to stop illegal migration as "an impor-

tant step" toward immigration reform.

Bush called for a temporary worker plan but opposed amnesty for the millions of illegal immigrants already in the United States. "There is a rational middle ground between granting an automatic pass to citizenship for every illegal immigrant and a program of mass deportation," he said.

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

Congressional Caucuses Help Draw Attention to Specific Issues . . .

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According to the House Committee on Administration, there were more than 200 of these caucuses in the 109th Congress. These included caucuses that promote an ethnic or cultural group interest, such as the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus. Other caucuses focus on regional issues, with members drawn from representatives of that region, regardless of party affiliation.

Other groups focus on very narrow topics: the Congressional Boating Caucus is a bipartisan group of members concerned with issues that affect the recreational marine industry, while the Congressional

Internet Caucus hosts briefings and workshops to teach members of Congress about technology and Internet policy.

Many of these caucuses have a bipartisan membership drawn from both the House and Senate. Only a few set specific qualifications for membership. For example, only women can join the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues. The size of a caucus varies – some have more than 100 members, while others have only a handful of participants.

Caucuses are not publicly funded. In the past, some had collected dues from their members that helped them operate and hire staff, but a 1995 law prohibited members from paying dues out of their office

accounts, a step that forced most caucuses to stop employing staff of their own. Today, many caucuses receive administrative support from members' personal staffs. Other caucuses have recruited outside partners to handle certain operations.

For more information, see U.S. Congress (<http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/congress.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>) ♦

Children's Hospice Movement Helps Families Overcome Barriers

By Carolee Walker
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – “We know from experience that although nothing will ever fill the void left by a child who has died,” parents who use children’s hospice care can gain comfort from being involved in their child’s life to the very end and can learn valuable lessons for their own lives, says Children’s Hospice International (CHI) founding director Ann Armstrong-Dailey.

CHI is a U.S. nongovernmental organization that provides education, training and technical assistance to health care workers, people caring for children with life-threatening conditions and those children’s families. Founded in 1983, when only four of the 1,400 hospices in the United States were able to care for children, CHI collaborates with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and health care providers in the United States to find better ways to care for terminally ill pediatric patients.

Without the kind of help that hospice care can provide, parents often are not present emotionally for their children, a situation that can let children die feeling isolated and abandoned, Armstrong-Dailey said.

“Fathers feel they are being punished by God, mothers feel responsible for the glass of wine they might have had while pregnant, children blame themselves and even doctors sometimes feel a strong sense of failure when they are unable to cure a sick child,” she said.

Hospices are programs or facilities that provide palliative care and attend to the medical and psychological needs of the terminally ill and

their families. They focus on easing symptoms and managing pain rather than curing the disease. Pediatric hospice care also addresses children’s questions about dying and what happens to them after they die.

“Families of terminally ill children need trained support from the beginning,” Armstrong-Dailey said, and children’s hospice care provides this support.



Jamie Meringer spends time with her daughter at the George Mark Children's House in San Leandro, California. (AP Images)

Hospice care designed for adults does not work well for children, according to Armstrong-Dailey, because the needs of children and the progression of their illnesses differ from those of adults. Hospices in the United States originally were designed for adult cancer patients who were able to track the progression of their disease and who knew when they were within the last six months of life.

By law, hospices can be used only by patients who have agreed to stop all curative treatment and who have fewer than six months to live. Both private insurance companies and federally funded health insurance plans, called Medicare and Medicaid, reimburse patients and their families for adult hospice-

related expenses.

Terminally ill children, however, often go in and out of the apparently terminal phases of their diseases for many years, Armstrong-Dailey said. For this reason and because the hope of a medical cure persists, she added, parents usually are not willing to give up curative efforts for young children in order to take advantage of hospice care.

To overcome barriers to providing appropriate care to children with life-threatening conditions, CHI’s Program for All-inclusive Care for Children and Their Families (CHI PACC) was developed with government funding and technical assistance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Using the CHI PACC model, state legislatures can obtain a waiver from CMS that permits hospice care to children from the time of diagnosis with hope for a cure through the bereavement period if a cure is not found. With CHI PACC, Medicare, Medicaid and a growing number of private insurers now reimburse families for comprehensive services throughout the health care system, whether care is provided to the child in the home, in the hospital or in a hospice or other appropriate facility.

Today, chiefly due to the efforts of Children’s Hospice International (CHI), most of the more than 3,000 hospices in the United States are able to accept children using the CHI PACC model. There are more than 450 programs with children-specific hospice, palliative- or home-care services. ♦

U.S. Trade Representative Optimistic on Future of Doha Trade Talks

By Carrie Loewenthal
USINFO Special Correspondent

Washington -- U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab says she is more optimistic than she has been "in many months" that members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) will successfully conclude the Doha round of negotiations.

Schwab spoke to reporters January 12 in Geneva, Switzerland, following a meeting with WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy. The meeting precedes the World Economic Forum meetings scheduled to take place in Davos, Switzerland, January 24-28. Schwab indicated that a number of key trade ministers expect to meet during the Forum to address issues hampering the completion of the Doha round of WTO negotiations, which collapsed in July over disagreements on agriculture issues. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=20060724145101ebyessedo3.396243e-02>).)

In recent months Schwab has held talks with trade representatives from Brazil, the European Union and Japan, and she noted that many of her counterparts have taken similar action.

"There are bilaterals going on all over the world that [the United States is] not a party to because a breakthrough is not going to just

involve two countries or three countries or five countries. This is more of a bottom-up process with engaging the larger membership of the WTO," she said.



Susan Schwab, U.S. Trade Representative

Schwab said country-to-country meetings are a step in the right direction, but cautioned that "ultimately it will be substance that dictates when there's a breakthrough" in the stalled talks. Resolution of technical issues concerning countries' domestic agricultural subsidies, non-agricultural market access and policies on services will be crucial, she said.

Schwab said her optimism for success of the Doha round comes from the fact that parties are once again

communicating.

"We're talking to each other, we're not talking past each other. And we're not talking to each other through [the press]. We're talking to each other directly, which is obviously much more conducive to reaching understanding," she said.

Schwab said she expects the bilateral talks that have taken place in recent months will continue in the wake of the Davos meetings as countries continue to work out their differences.

"Are we near a breakthrough? No. We've got a long way to go for a breakthrough. Are we making progress? Absolutely, we're making progress," she said.

For more information on U.S. policy, see USA and the WTO (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/WTO.html).

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

Rice Pledges Ongoing U.S. Commitment to Mideast Peace Process

By Carrie Loewenthal
USINFO Special Correspondent

Washington -- The United States is "deeply committed to finding ways to accelerate progress" toward a two-state solution in the Middle East and to resolve the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told reporters January 14 in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Rice met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas as part of her weeklong visit to the region. She assured Abbas she has "heard loud and clear the call for deeper American engagement" in moving forward on the peace process.

"The United States is absolutely committed to helping to find a solution where Israelis and Palestinians can live in security, in which they can live in peace and in which they can live in democracy," Rice said.

The secretary noted the timing of her visit, which followed what she called a "successful meeting" between Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Rice said she wants to "build on the momentum that is currently in Palestinian-Israeli relations to look at the political horizon and to begin to show to the Palestinian people how we might move toward the establishment of a Palestinian state."

When asked about tens of millions of dollars in proposed U.S. aid for Palestinian security forces, Rice said the U.S. contribution would be part of an international effort. The money would be used to train and equip "professional, unified Palestinian security forces" in a program

that "will unfold over a period of time" she said.

"I am sure that President Abbas and his people will want to be attentive to the requirements of the plan, including attentive to concerns about



Condoleezza Rice, left, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas shake hands following a press conference at Abbas' office in the West Bank city of Ramallah, Sunday, Jan. 14, 2007. (AP)

human rights which are there in all of our train-and-equip programs around with world," Rice continued.

Rice praised Abbas's leadership of the Palestinian people, and voiced the United States' desire for the Palestinians "to be able to live in unity and in democracy and in peace with a government that can get the respect and the support of the international community."

"That is something the Palestinian people deserve," she said. In a later interview in Jerusalem with the Arabic newspaper Al Quds, Rice expanded on that point. "The Pales-

tinian people have waited a long time to have a state" and have "put up with ... daily humiliations of not having a state." She added that "the Israeli people have waited a long time to feel secure in their state," and that a two-state resolution would "make a big difference" for both peoples.

Rice's meeting with Abbas followed discussions with members of the Israeli government in an effort to "enlist the support of anybody I can" in moving forward toward a peaceful two-state solution, the secretary said.

After her meeting, Rice reflected on the progress in the peace process to date in an interview in Jerusalem with Israel's Channel 10. Speaking about Israel's disengagement from Gaza, Rice said she was "particularly impressed with young officers of the [Israel Defense Forces] and how they managed [the Israeli withdrawal]."

"It is true that security in Gaza has been really problematic, particularly between Palestinians,

but indeed as they begin to solve their own political crisis one would hope that ... the promise of what could be in the Gaza can really be fulfilled," she continued. Rice then said that the disengagement "was actually a very important and good step forward for peace."

SYRIA

Asked during the Channel 10 interview about the possibility of Israeli engagement with Syria, Rice said the United States "would like to see at some point a resolution on the Syria matter" but noted that Syria

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U.S. Expects Results of Policy Shift in Iraq To Emerge Quickly

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Defense Secretary Robert Gates says results of boosting the number of U.S. troops in Iraq by some 21,500 will be known "fairly quickly," and the effort to quell violence there has a reasonable prospect of success if the Iraqis fulfill a variety of existing commitments.

Gates told the Senate Armed Services Committee January 12 the first of five new U.S. brigades will arrive in Iraq in mid-January, and U.S.-Iraqi operations to stabilize Iraqi neighborhoods systematically will begin seriously "around the first week of February."

The secretary said the effectiveness of the plan should be apparent within "a couple of months" because by then it will be clear if new military operations will be carried out without Iraqi political interference. The Iraqis have to demonstrate they "finally have the will to act against all instigators of violence in Baghdad," Gates said.

He said Iraq has reached "a pivotal point," and overcoming its steep challenges requires more than military muscle. Progress, Gates said, requires Iraqis to address issues that long have divided them. Given the deteriorating situation, he said, Iraqi politicians now realize they are running out of time.

If the Iraqis follow through on their commitment to distribute oil reve-

nues equitably, for example, and the level of sectarian violence decreases, Gates indicated it might be possible -- at some point -- to send some of the troops composing part of this new increase home -- and with sufficient progress there could be additional troop reductions in the future.

Some committee members expressed skepticism about the new strategy for Iraq President Bush outlined January 10. Committee Chairman Carl Levin, for example, said

implemented and sustained."

MILITARY COMMANDERS CALLED FOR TROOP INCREASE

General Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who testified with Gates, agreed the strategy of increasing the number of troops in Iraq alone will not solve that nation's problems because there must be a change in the political environment as well. Both Pace and Gates said the impetus for boosting the level of troops in Iraq came directly from the commanders in the region, not Washington.

Within months, Gates said, it will be clear whether the military part of the strategy is working as envisioned. If not, he said, the U.S. strategy will be re-evaluated.

Gates was pressed for benchmarks by which to measure Iraqi success in the near term. He said an early indicator will be if the Iraqi security forces enter mixed neighborhoods, like Sadr City, clear them of insurgents and deny their use as safe



US Defense Secretary Robert Gates (L) and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Peter Pace testify at the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on Capitol Hill in January 12, 2007. REUTERS/Larry Downing

putting more U.S. troops in Iraq is based on a false premise that there can be a military solution to instability in Iraq "when what is needed is a political solution among the Iraqi leaders and factions."

Gates said civilian and military defense officials believe this is "a sound plan that can work if the Iraqi government follows through on its commitments and if the non-military aspects of the strategy are

havens.

Any effort to withdraw U.S. troops prematurely could leave "Iraq in chaos," Gates warned, and bring about the disintegration of the country. Senator Joseph Lieberman concurred with this assessment, saying that although there never are guarantees of success, "it would be a disaster to fail in Iraq."

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2006 Among Deadliest Years for Journalists, Press Groups Say

By Eric Green
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – The world became a more dangerous place for journalists in 2006, with more members of the media killed during that year than in any year since 1994, several global press freedom advocacy groups report.

In its "Press Freedom Round-up 2006," released December 31, 2006, Reporters Without Borders -- a Paris-based international nongovernmental organization that advocates for freedom of the press -- said at least 81 journalists were killed in 21 countries while doing their job, the highest annual toll since 1994, when 103 journalists died.

Reflecting on the dangers facing journalists worldwide, Karen Hughes, the U.S. State Department's under secretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs, told USINFO in a January 12 statement that one of the issues she is very concerned about "as a communicator in government, is press freedom."

Hughes, who has worked as a journalist, said she is convinced that press freedom "goes hand in hand with good government. There is always a healthy tension between government and the press, but they both need each other. A free press holds government officials to account; government officials rely on the press to inform their constituents about what they are doing."

And yet, Hughes added, "we live in a time of unprecedented attacks on

the media around the world. Journalists in many countries face the threat of being harassed, abducted, imprisoned, tortured, maimed or assassinated just for doing their jobs. We need to talk much more in international circles about the extent of this problem -- what's being done about it -- and what more we could do."



The State Department's Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy, and Labor said in marking World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2006, that a "free press empowers the powerless, exposes corruption, encourages transparency in governance, and promotes participation in the political process. That is why supporting press freedom is an integral part of [U.S. government] efforts to promote human rights and democracy worldwide."

The State Department also documents repression against journalists worldwide in its annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.

IRAQ A PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS PLACE FOR REPORTERS

Reporters Without Borders said that for the fourth straight year, Iraq was the world's most dangerous country for the media. In 2006, some 64 journalists and media assistants (drivers, translators and technicians) were killed in Iraq. About 90 percent of the victims were Iraqis, the group said.

The second most dangerous country for the media was Mexico, with nine journalists killed in the nation in 2006, according to Reporters Without Borders. Mexico moved ahead of Colombia as Latin America's most deadly country for the media.

The press group said the Philippines was in third place, describing as "grim" the situation for journalists in that country, followed by Russia in fourth place, where three journalists were killed during 2006.

The Reporters Without Borders' report followed a December 2006 U.N. Security Council resolution condemning "intentional attacks" against journalists and calling for the prosecution of the killers of journalists. The council said it was "deeply concerned" at the "frequency of acts of violence in many parts of the world against journalists," in particular "deliberate attacks in violation of international humanitarian law."

In a separate action, the Brussels, Belgium-based International Federation of Journalists, one of the world's largest organizations of journalists, said in a December 31,

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2006 Among Deadliest Years for Journalists, Press Groups Say . . .

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2006, statement that 2006 was a "year of tragedy" for the world press as killings of reporters and media staff reached "historic levels" with at least 155 murders, assassinations and unexplained deaths.

The group's general secretary, Aidan White, said the "media have become more powerful and journalism has become more dangerous." White said 2006 was "the worst year on record -- a year of targeting, brutality and continued impunity in the killing of journalists."

Like Reporters Without Borders, the Brussels group said Iraq was the deadliest place for journalists. Its figures showed 68 members of the

media were killed in that country.

Media organizations report differing death tolls in part because they use different criteria to classify reporters.

White welcomed the U.N. Security Council's resolution on protecting journalists. He said the United Nations has "put the focus on a deepening media crisis. It is long overdue. We want to see action against countries that allow impunity in the killing of journalists."

Another free-press advocate, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, said its research found that 56 journalists around the world were killed in 2006. The journalists either died in the line of

duty or deliberately were targeted for assassination because of their reporting or their affiliation with a news organization, said the New York group.

The "Press Freedom Round-up 2006 (http://www.rsf.org/article.php?id_article=20286)" and the U.N. Security Council resolution (<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/681/60/PDF/N0668160.pdf?OpenElement>) are available on the organizations' Web sites.

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

Rice Pledges Ongoing U.S. Commitment to Mideast Peace Process . . .

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currently continues to try to "undermine the government of Lebanon" and "play a negative role in the Palestinian conflict."

"There's no indication that the Syrian government has anything but disruptive plans right now," Rice said. "[The United States continues] to look for evidence that Syria's behavior is changing, that Syria is going to stop supporting the destabilization of Iraq, that Syria will stop supporting the destabilization of Lebanon and that it will be a positive force in the territories."

IRAN

In the Channel 10 interview, Rice also discussed the December 23,

2006, U.N. Security Council resolution to sanction Iran in response to the country's refusal to halt its nuclear enrichment programs.

"[The resolution] sends a very strong message to Iran that the world is united against the nuclear program that Iran is embarked upon," she said. "Perhaps states will think twice and companies will think twice and banks will think twice about their dealings with Iran."

Rice said that there is still "plenty of room for diplomacy" with Iran, and before considering military operations, "more muscular diplomacy with financial measures backing up the kinds of things that we're doing in the Security Council" could come into play.

Other stops on Rice's trip include Luxor, Egypt; Amman, Jordan; Kuwait City; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; London and Berlin before returning to Washington January 19.

Transcripts of Rice's press availability with Abbas, interview with Israel's Channel 10, and interview with Al Quds are available on the State Department Web site.

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United States Sees Key Role for United Nations in 2007

By Judy Aita
USINFO United Nations Correspondent

United Nations -- In 2007, the U.N. Security Council must be ready to deal with terrorism, cross-border violence, widespread and systematic human rights violations, refugee flows and political instability before these issues escalate into wars, the United States says.

U.S. Ambassador Alejandro Wolff said January 8 that as the challenges facing the international community grow more complex, the council must act not only to manage conflicts but to prevent them, and then help countries emerging from crisis situations consolidate peace based on economic and political development.



U.S. Ambassador
Alejandro Wolff

In facing these challenges, said Wolff, the current head of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations, the Security Council "must be prepared to act quickly to respond to emerging threats or developing crises; but ... must act in a way that improves the situation on the ground."

Wolff spoke during the Security Council's first meeting with U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who began a five-year term at the beginning of January, to discuss the council's priorities for 2007. In 2006, the council grappled with human rights abuses in Burma, conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, nuclear weapons programs in North Korea and Iran, and political and security challenges in Afghanistan and Iraq -- all of which remain on the council's agenda. The United Nations has 18 peace-keeping missions, with an all-time

high of 100,000 personnel and increases scheduled for some missions in 2007. The United Nations is engaged to some degree in another 12 peace operations, the secretary-general reported.

In Washington, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on January 8 announced the nomination of Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad to be the chief envoy to the United Nations, highlighting the importance of the organization to the United States. The challenges facing the United Nations demand a skilled and experienced diplomat with proven ability to lead from principle and to build consensus -- attributes Khalilzad has demonstrated as the current U.S. ambassador to Iraq, former envoy to Afghanistan and former special assistant to President Bush, Rice said.

In a statement from Baghdad, Iraq, Khalilzad pledged to advance "an agenda to promote our common interests -- a world in which we take collective action against threats to security, in which freedom and democracy are expanding, in which the rule of law becomes more widespread, and in which all nations enjoy economic prosperity."

Ban told the council that the Darfur region of Sudan -- where the humanitarian situation is growing worse despite international efforts over the past three years -- is a top priority. One of his first initiatives was to appoint former Swedish Foreign Minister Jan Eliasson as his special envoy for Darfur and immediately send him to the region.

Ban said the council must do more to invigorate nonproliferation ef-

orts, including addressing the special challenges Iran and North Korea pose. Terrorism, he continued, demands "urgent, sustained and comprehensive attention from the international community."

Wolff said in the past few years the council increasingly has dealt not only with conflicts between states, but conflicts within states. Citing Darfur as a prime example, he said internal conflicts create unstable borders, increase regional tensions and result in significant economic and social burdens.

"Not only does this council need to act to protect civilian populations that are the targets of their own government, but experience has demonstrated many times over that in today's world, events occurring in one country affect the world beyond its boundaries," the ambassador said.

Wolff also said the terrorist group al-Qaida has issued an explicit threat against the United Nations and its peacekeepers. "We know that terrorists still work to kill innocent civilians around the world and [the Security Council] has a responsibility to meet these threats with unity of purpose and clear resolve," he said.

The 15-nation Security Council is responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Its decisions are binding on all U.N. members. It has no set schedule of meetings and its members are on call at all times.

Members of the 2007 Security Council are Belgium, China, France, Ghana, Indonesia, Italy, Panama, Peru, Qatar, Republic of the Congo, Russia, Slovakia, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States. ♦

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Americans Celebrate Achievements of Martin Luther King Jr. . . .

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by heart lines from the I Have a Dream speech, in which King prayed for the day when people would "not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

The images from Birmingham and Washington helped crystallize support for the Civil Rights Act of 1964, signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 2, 1964. In 1965, the violent Selma, Alabama, police response to a voting rights march sparked a similar surge in support for King, the civil rights movement and for legislation guaranteeing the right of political participation. Consequently, the Voting Rights Act became law on August 6, 1965.

With the passage of these civil

rights laws, King continued to employ his strategy of nonviolent social protest even as some younger leaders at times argued for more radical means. King also broadened his agenda to encompass efforts to focus attention on African-American poverty. King was in Memphis, Tennessee, in support of striking black garbage workers when, on April 4, 1968, an assassin's bullet cut him down at the age of 39.

Americans honor the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. with a national holiday celebrated on the third Monday of each January, and soon by a national monument, to be constructed in direct sight of the Lincoln Memorial, where King inspired Americans with his dreams of racial justice and equality. Countless individuals and organizations, including The King Center, in Atlanta, carry on his work. ♦

U.S. Expects Results of Policy Shift in Iraq To Emerge Quickly . . .

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But committee members such as Senator Ted Kennedy asked why another increase in U.S. troops will make a difference when others – in 2004, 2005 and 2006 – did not.

Other members such as Senator John McCain said an increase in the number of U.S. forces is necessary to reduce the "toxic levels of violence in Baghdad and Anbar province." He also suggested Saudi Arabia should help fund a job creation program for Iraq and other regional nations should not remain aloof "while Baghdad burns."

INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY WEIGHS IN ON IRAQ

The U.S. military presentation to the committee on Iraq was somewhat more optimistic than the U.S. intelligence assessment presented January 11 to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Defense Intelligence Agency Director Lieutenant General Michael Maples warned violence in Iraq has increased in scope and lethality.

U.S. intelligence chief John Negroponte described the situation in Iraq as grave, but not hopeless. Time will tell if the Iraqis can make the political compromises necessary, he said. But to give Iraqi national reconciliation a chance to succeed, the newly nominated deputy secretary of state said, se-

curity has to be established. The lack of a secure environment has precipitated much of the negative behavior that is occurring in Iraq, Negroponte added.

CIA Director Michael Hayden said the success of the new plan for Iraq does not depend so much on Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki as it does on the performance of the entire current government. Success or failure depends on its ability to establish security, the Air Force general said, which is a precursor to political and economic progress.

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