



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

U.S. Grants Assist Community Development

Ambassador's Self Help Program, Democracy Fund Empower Projects Across Ethiopia

Addis Ababa (U.S. Embassy) – On Thursday, October 20, U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Ambassador Vicki Huddleston marked the 2005 round of grants to community organizations across the country through the Ambassador’s Special Self Help Program and Democracy and Human Rights Fund. These special programs



Ambassador Vicki Huddleston (right) with Ayan Abdalla Hashi of the Ogaden Welfare and Development Association, one of the grantee Organization, at the signing ceremony.

gives U.S. Ambassadors in many countries in the developing worldAfrica

the opportunity to fund community-based initiatives that might not oth-

erwise meet the criteria of traditional development assistance. Among the 15 projects made possible by this year’s grants are initiatives to expand classrooms in Amhara, to purchase and install a grinding mill in Gambella, to to construct antenatal, delivery, and postnatal wards

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American Muslims Observe Holy Month of Ramadan

By Afzal Khan
Washington File Special
Correspondent

Washington -- Millions of American Muslims began observing the holy month of Ramadan on October 5 after the new crescent moon was sighted the evening before. Many of them are

fasting from dawn to dusk and attending special evening prayers to read chapters from the Quran.

President Bush on October 4 sent greetings to Muslims in the United States and throughout the world as they began their observance of Ramadan. He praised American Mus-

lims for their commitment to spiritual growth and charity during the holy month and welcomed the contributions they have made to American society. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile->

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American Muslims Observe Holy Month of Ramadan . . .

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eng-lish&y=2005&m=October&x=20051004113354ndyblehs0.1206934&t=mena/mena-latest.html.)

During Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, Muslims also meditate on how to become more virtuous persons as well as caring citizens who help those who are poor and needy.

Ibrahim Hooper, a spokesman for the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), said this year's Ramadan has become a

month of charity and giving more than ever before because of natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the massive earthquake in Pakistan and parts of India and Afghanistan.

"The benefits of Ramadan are being better understood because those who are fasting can appreciate the suffering of the victims of these natural disasters, many of whom are hungry and without shelter," Hooper said.

In the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, American Muslims are also eager to explain Islam to other Americans and the holy month of Ramadan offers

many opportunities to share.

CAIR, the largest Islamic civil liberties and advocacy group in the United States, is conducting a nationwide "Sharing Ramadan" outreach effort to invite non-Muslims



U.S. Navy sailors of Islamic faith pray aboard ship on the first day of Ramadan.

to learn more about the values of Islam.

CAIR is also sponsoring a campaign called "Explore the Quran" by distributing free Qurans to non-Muslims who want to understand Islam better. Those who request a Quran receive a hardcover book with an English translation next to the Arabic on each page.

COMMUNITIES COMING TOGETHER ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

In their effort to reach out to other Americans, Muslims have organized community get-togethers across the country to

share iftar, the meal after sunset that breaks the daylong fast.

Hooper said that an iftar get-together was arranged on October 11 for U.S. congressional aides on Capitol Hill so that they can learn more about Islam.

In Columbus, Ohio, on October 9, 450 people including the mayor and several other elected officials attended iftar sponsored by the local branch of CAIR. In addition, CAIR and the local Islamic center, provided hot meals to more than 400 low-income residents.

Muslims in Chicago, Illinois, marked the beginning of Ramadan with daily open house iftar meals

for neighbors and the homeless through a local mosque.

Even as far away as Anchorage, Alaska, a small community of Muslims from Burma, Pakistan, Egypt and other African countries are observing Ramadan in the city's small mosque.

STUDENTS OBSERVING RAMADAN

Muslim university students across the United States are playing an active role in promoting the virtues of fasting during Ramadan.

On October 8, the Muslim St u-

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Chargé Hosts Diplomats, Political Leaders

On Wednesday, October 19, The U.S. Chargé d’Affaires, Ambassador Vicki Huddleston, hosted a luncheon that brought together members of the diplomatic community in Addis Ababa, government officials, and members of several political parties. Among those in attendance were ambassadors or representatives of embassies and missions including those of Austria, Canada, Ghana,

the United Kingdom, the European Union, and the UNDP. Other guests included Wzo. Shitaye Minale, Deputy Speaker of Parliament; Dr. Negasso Gidada, Former President and Member of Parliament; CUD leaders Dr. Yacob Hailemariam and Engineer Gizachew Shiferaw; UEDF leaders Dr. Merera Gudina and Dr. Beyene Petros; Ato Bulcha Demeksa of OFDM; and Members of Parliament

Wzo. Netsanet Asfaw and Ato Wondimu Gezahegn of the EPRDF. Joining Ambassador Huddleston from the U.S. mission in Ethiopia were acting USAID Director R. Douglass Arbuckle, Public Affairs Counselor Anthony O. Fisher, and Political and Economic Counselor Kevin Sullivan, among others.



Ambassador Huddleston (center) greets guests including Dr. Negasso Gidada (left) and the Reverend Canon Burgess Carr of the UNDP.



Dr. Negasso Gidada and Dr. Yacob Hailemariam in discussion at lunch



Ambassador Huddleston with Wzo. Shitaye Minale, Deputy Speaker of Parliament.

New Agreement for U.S. Partnership with the National Archives & Library

On Tuesday, October 16, The U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Counselor, Anthony O. Fisher, joined Ato Atkilt Assefa, Director General of the National Archives and Library of Ethiopia, to sign an agreement establishing a new American Corner, which will be housed at the National Archives and Library's nearly completed new headquarters in Addis Ababa.

The partnership created by this agreement will provide the new facility with a collection of electronic and paper material relating to U.S. history, culture, and current affairs, as well as entrepreneurship, HIV/AIDS, and other important topics; in addition, the new American Corner will provide a range of audio-visual and computer equipment.

The Addis American Corner will be the third in Ethiopia, joining one in Harar (hosted by the Teachers Training Institute there) and one in Bahir Dar (hosted by the public library of the Jerusalem



Public Affairs Counselor Anthony O. Fisher (left), and Ato Atkilt Assefa, Director General of the National Archives and Library of Ethiopia.

Children and Community Development Organization, or JeCCDO). American Corners are a worldwide initiative of the U.S. Department of State, aimed at bringing useful information on the United States and other subjects to the general public and at building linkages between the Information Resource Centers housed at U.S. Embassies and information institutions in host countries.

U.S. Grants Assist Community Development . . .

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at a health center in Oromiya, and to to discourage female genital cutting in the Somali region.

Together, the projects represent funding of \$153,000 (over 1.3 million birr). Grantees are selected from hundreds of proposals received by the Embassy; they are required to meet rigorous standards that ensure that funded programs improve economic and social conditions at the community or village level; support high-impact, quick-implementation activities benefiting a large number of people in one year's time; are community-initiated; show evidence of local support; and are self-sustaining. This year's projects will reach more than 300,000 Ethiopians in eight of the

country's 11 administrative regions.



Ambassador Vicki Huddleston speaking at the signing ceremony.

The Ambassador's Special Self-Help Program and Democracy and Human Rights Fund have been active in Africa since the early 1960's. The success of the pro-

grams is demonstrated by the direct effects they have on the lives of those benefiting from the project. For example, in Moyale district, Borena Zone, Oromiya Region, construction of an underground water cistern to capture rainwater from catchments has greatly reduced the burden on women and girls, who previously walked six hours a day to fetch water for their families.

"People-to-people projects such as these exemplify the best of U.S. humanitarian assistance," said Ambassador Huddleston.

"They reach people at the community level and provide them the support needed to improve their lives and the lives of their children." ♦

USAID Reaffirms Continued Commitment to Africa

By Christine Terada
Washington File Staff Writer



Lloyd O. Pierson

Washington -- U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Assistant Administrator for Africa Lloyd O. Pierson has a message for Africans: "We will live up to our responsibilities and commitment to Africa," even in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the United States.

In a recent interview with the Washington File at USAID headquarters, Pierson emphasized the high priority the Bush administration gives to Africa and the "very close working relationship that we have, the partnership we have with the Africans."

Pierson recalled his recent meetings with African government officials in New York in September at the opening of the 60th session of the United Nations General Assembly, to illustrate the strength of that relationship. Many of those individuals he has known for years, he said, originally having met them through former work in Africa with the Peace Corps (as chief of staff/chief of operations) and with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Following his meetings with the African officials, Pierson said, he met with most of the African ambassadors' corps in Washington at USAID headquarters for extensive talks. The African ambassadors focused on "jobs, jobs, jobs," he emphasized, citing the 60 percent to 80 percent unemployment rate in some of their countries. He also

said the talks included a concrete, realistic focus on economic development.

"Our view is that we want results and we want to show that we can respond in a very prompt, timely way," Pierson said. As a result of the president's direct involvement, he said, issues such as malaria, famine, HIV/AIDS and economic development already been addressed significantly.

COSTS OF HURRICANE RELIEF WILL NOT DERAIL U.S. AID TO AFRICA

When asked about competing resources for aid in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the USAID official drove home the point that aid is not a zero sum game. He reaffirmed: "It is well documented that President Bush and this administration have a compassionate commitment, a humanitarian commitment, a development commitment, to Africa."

Regarding the hurricane relief effort specifically, Pierson said, "We've all got to be aware of fiscal constraints."

"There's no question there is a tug-of-war on financial resources, that's always there," he said. "We have Katrina and Rita, and issues there, and it's not an easy road, but the administration made a commitment to Africa."

"It is this administration that has given that focus on Africa, as well as a number of world events," he said. Africa is strategically important to the United States, he said.

In fiscal year 2005, under Pierson's direction, USAID's Africa Bureau managed more than \$1.4 bil-

lion in development assistance, aid for child survival and health and funding for the Global AIDS Initiative in Africa. Twelve of the 15 focus countries under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) are in Africa, and USAID is one of the key implementing agencies in this initiative's response.

USAID programs in Africa contribute directly to the priorities outlined in the joint State Department/USAID Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2004-2009, particularly those priorities that advance sustainable development and global interests.

The centerpieces of USAID's assistance to the subcontinent are the four presidential initiatives launched in fiscal year 2002 -- the Initiative to End Hunger in Africa (IEHA), the TRADE initiative (which now is being subsumed under a new African Global Competitiveness Initiative), the Congo Basin Forest Partnership Initiative and the Africa Education Initiative -- as well as PEPFAR, launched in fiscal year 2004. Other key elements of the program include the continuation of the African Anti-Corruption Initiative, the Conflict Initiative, and the Leland Initiative to increase access to information technology.

Pierson said USAID's growing success across sub-Saharan Africa is demonstrated in the very large number of countries that want a USAID mission.

For additional on U.S. efforts to assist the continent, see U.S. Aid to Africa (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/aid_to_africa.html). ♦

Liberia's Elections Conducted Fairly, U.S. Delegation Says

The U.S. delegation that observed the Liberian elections on October 11 "saw well-equipped and well-organized voting operations conducted by Liberian election officials, who implemented voting procedures fairly and accurately," according to a preliminary assessment released October 13 by the Department of State.

The high-level delegation, headed by Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer, observed the voting, vote reconciliation, and counting process throughout the day at numerous polling stations in several counties. Accredited observers from the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia observed election activities.

In the elections, an estimated 1.3 million registered voters were asked to choose from more than 20 candidates for the presidency and from more than 700 candidates for Liberia's two chambers of congress.

The elections were a crucial part of the Liberian peace agreement brokered by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which brought an end to 14 years of civil war in the West African country. They were Liberia's first elections since the end of that civil war.

The American delegation was in Liberia as part of the U.S. commitment to support democracy in the country, which was founded by freed slaves from the United States.

For additional information on U.S. policy in the region, see Africa (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/>).

Following is the text of the State Department statement:

(begin text)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
October 13, 2005

TAKEN QUESTION FROM OCTOBER 13, 2005 DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer and included Senator Lincoln Chafee, Congressman Donald Payne, USAID Assistant Administrator Lloyd Pierson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Linda Thomas-Greenfield, and U.S. Ambassador to Liberia Donald Booth, observed the voting, vote reconciliation, and counting process throughout the day of October 11, 2005, at numerous polling stations in the



A U.N. troop guards ballot boxes on the outskirts of the city of Monrovia, Liberia on Wednesday, Oct. 12, 2005.

Preliminary Assessment of the Liberian Elections

QUESTION: What is your assessment of Liberia's October 11 electoral process?

ANSWER: Following is the preliminary statement released in Liberia by the official United States Observer Delegation for the Liberian Elections:

The official United States Observer Delegation for the Liberian Elections, which was headed by

counties of Montserado, Bomi, Margibi, and Grand Cape Mount. In addition, accredited observers from the United States Embassy in Monrovia observed voting and vote counting at numerous additional polling places in the above mentioned counties, as well as in Bong, Nimba, Gbarpolu, and Grand Bassa counties.

At all polling stations the U.S. observers saw well equipped and well organized voting operations conducted by Liberian election offi-

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Former State Dept. Official Sees "Five African Lions" by 2015

By Tanya Salseth Feau
Washington File Staff Writer



Herman J. Cohen

Washington -- Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa and Ghana could rival

"Asian tigers" like South Korea by 2015, says former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman J. Cohen.

In a Washington File interview October 6, Cohen, who was assistant secretary of state for Africa from 1989 to 1993, said he expects "good things" from the "five African lions," including consistent gross domestic product growth of 7 percent or more a year and the development of a common market for Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda.

In the 1960s, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan were at comparable levels of wealth as African countries, Cohen said. Since that time, the "four Asian tigers" have experienced astonishing rates of sustained growth, while their African counterparts, for the most part, have stagnated.

Cohen said he believes the trend is reversible, provided the lions return to their agricultural strengths and maximize their inexpensive labor force through manufacturing.

"More money is not necessarily the answer," the former ambassador to Senegal and The Gambia

emphasized. "If you look at all the money that's gone into Africa since the Second World War, there have been 25 Marshall Plans [the U.S. plan for the reconstruction of Europe after World War II]. So money is not an issue. The question is how you use it and what the policies are."

Acknowledging that debt has been a continual problem, Cohen commended President Bush's "creative" solutions, in particular his push for multilateral development bank assistance in the form of grants rather than loans.

In 2001, when nearly 100 percent of assistance to the world's poorest countries was provided as loans, Bush challenged the World Bank to stop the "lend-and-forgive cycle" and provide 50 percent of its aid as assistance grants.

Today, approximately 45 percent of the bank's aid to the poorest countries is provided in the form of grants. Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania all benefit from the program.

These three African lions also illustrate Bush's policy of "backing winners" -- a strategy that concentrates "the lion's share" of U.S. development assistance on those countries most likely to "roar," says Cohen. Ghana, for example, is currently set to receive assistance under the President's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which provides development assistance to those countries that rule justly, invest in their people and encourage economic freedom.

Kenya and Tanzania also are being considered, having been designated "threshold countries" --

those committed to undertaking the reforms necessary to improve policy performance and eventually qualify for MCC funding -- in 2004.

"Why not concentrate resources in these countries to make sure they do succeed?" Cohen mused. "People criticize the MCC for the way it's been administered, but I think the idea behind it is a very good one."

The administration's substantial increases in financial assistance to Africa elicited praise from Cohen, who commended the tripling of U.S. assistance to Africa to \$3.2 billion in 2004 as well as the \$15 billion HIV/AIDS prevention program, the majority of which benefits countries in sub-Saharan Africa. To date, the program has helped treat 235,000 Africans, 90,700 of whom live in Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya.

The ambassador was less enthusiastic, however, about the emphasis on teaching abstinence that often accompanies HIV/AIDS assistance: "Let local governments decide how to handle it, based on their culture," he said.

Cohen's tiger-lion comparisons inevitably invoke questions about the growing influence of China on the African continent. Chinese investment in Africa has more than tripled since 2000, passing the \$30 billion mark in 2004, and Chinese-Kenyan trade alone has doubled in the last three years. He sees these developments as positive: "China could do a lot for Africa. China is hungry for resources. ... Whatever Africa has to offer, they need it."

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President's Emergency AIDS Relief Plan Funds Program in Rwanda

By Christine A. Terada
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief has selected a consortium of nongovernmental organizations to work toward providing sustainable HIV/AIDS services in Rwanda, according to an October 14 press release from CHF International.

Through a four-year, \$40 million cooperative agreement, the consortium of four U.S. organizations, led by CHF (Cooperative Housing Foundation) International, will work with local Rwandan partners to implement the Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Program (CHAMP).

CHAMP's objective is "to provide Rwandan communities with equitable access to high-quality and sustainable HIV/AIDS services," the press release said. In doing so, the program will mobilize and strengthen Rwanda's government and its organizations and institutions.

The program is designed to help Rwandan communities help themselves, and aims to revitalize AIDS activism by building a powerful community-based movement bridging HIV/AIDS, human rights, and struggles for social and economic justice, the release said.

CHAMP hopes to fulfill this goal by focusing on strengthening the relationships between Rwandan communities, community-based service providers, and medical health service providers. It will also improve and expand HIV/AIDS

prevention, treatment, and care services and provide care and support for orphans and vulnerable children.

CHF International, which was called the Cooperative Housing



Infected and affected Rwandan artisans

Foundation before 1998 and was originally established in 1952 as the Foundation for Cooperative Housing, is known for its community-based approach. It plans to subgrant a substantial amount of the program's funding to local Rwandan organizations, thereby empowering them with the financial resources needed to help their communities. It will also provide extensive skills-building assistance to encourage sustainable HIV/AIDS services and strengthen local capacity.

CHF International's senior vice president, Dr. Judith A. Hermanson, said in the press release: "We are very pleased to be playing a leading role in fighting HIV/AIDS in Rwanda, and commend the U.S. government, the American people, and the government of Rwanda for supporting such an important initiative."

CHF International's mission is to be a catalyst for long-lasting, positive change in low- and moderate-income communities around the world, helping them to improve their social, economic, and environ-

mental conditions. The organization was recognized in 2001 for its assisted self-help housing program in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

Other organizations participating in CHAMP include Catholic Relief Services, Johns Hopkins Univer-

sity Center for Communications Programs, and Social Impact. According to the release, the program will also work with numerous Rwandan partners, including Rwanda Women's Network, Caritas, and the Rwanda Network of People Living with AIDS.

The CHAMP program was created in the same spirit as another CHF International HIV/AIDS effort in Kenya -- Local Prevention and Treatment of HIV/AIDS and Grants Management -- also funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

President Bush announced the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief in his 2003 State of the Union address. The five-year, \$15 billion initiative aims to combat the global HIV/AIDS pandemic by focusing on the most afflicted countries in Africa and the Caribbean. ♦

President Bush Hosts Iftar Dinner at White House

Hosting his fifth Iftar dinner October 17 at the White House, President Bush spoke of the spirit and compassion of Islam and thanked the Muslims nations that have joined the coalition in the War on Terror.

The president, quoting a Muslim leader, said it is an obligation to assist one's neighbors when they are in need. The American people, he said, saw that spirit as the nation recovered from hurricanes Katrina and Rita. "The world sees that spirit, that compassion of Islam, through the countless acts of kindness following the recent earthquake" in South Asia, the president added.



President George W. Bush addresses the Iftar Dinner with Ambassadors and Muslim Leaders in the State Dining Room of the White House, Monday, Oct. 17, 2005. White House photo by Paul Morse

stand confidently in the cause of freedom – including the freedom of people everywhere to practice their faith in peace. We must also

The president also cited Muslim scholars who have condemned terrorism. "And I believe the time has come for all responsible Islamic leaders to denounce an ideology that exploits Islam for political ends and defiles your noble faith."

The president said he is encouraging Americans to travel abroad and visit with Muslim families to promote greater understandings. "I have asked young Americans to study the language and customs of the broader Middle East. And for the first time in our nation's history we have added a Quran to the White House Library."

Bush, addressing American Muslim leaders as well as members of the diplomatic corps in the meal that breaks the daytime fast during the month of Ramadan, said all Americans share the common hope of a more peaceful world. "We must

firmly oppose all who commit evil in God's name. I am grateful to the Muslim nations that have joined our coalition in the War on Terror – including many nations that have been victims of terror themselves."

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

American Muslims Observe Holy Month of Ramadan . . .

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dent Association at Case Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio joined non-Muslim students for a Fast-a-thon, one day of fasting and fund-raising for area food banks.

In Binghamton High School, Binghamton, New York, Muslim students are straddling two worlds. On the one hand, they live in the Muslim world of fasting, prayer

and reading the Quran. On the other, they live in the American teenage world of high school, sports, and peer groups.

Upcoming Ramadan events include the second annual Sharing Ramadan Community Dinner on October 15 at the student center of the Metro Campus of Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio.

On October 22, the American Moroccan Association of North America will host its eighth annual Ramadan iftar in Falls Church, Virginia.

Ramadan is expected to end on November 2 and the festival of Eid-ul Fitr will be celebrated on November 3, depending on the sighting of the new moon.♦

Muslim Americans Pledge \$20 Million for South Asian Quake Victims

By Christine A. Terada
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Leaders from member organizations of the American Muslim Taskforce for Disaster Relief (AMTFDR) gathered at a press conference October 13 in Washington to announce their pledge to raise \$20 million in aid for victims of the South Asian earthquake.

The 7.6-magnitude earthquake swept across central Afghanistan to western Bangladesh on October 8, killing more than 30,000 people, injuring more than 45,000, and leaving approximately 3.5 million homeless. Its epicenter was in Muzafarabad, the capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/Archive/2005/Oct/10-411495.html>).

President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have pledged \$50 million in disaster assistance, helicopters, and fixed wing aircraft to help the victims of the disaster. Secretary Rice detoured her trip to Central Asia October 12 to visit Pakistani leaders and American troops who are providing transport to the injured in the area affected by the earthquake. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/Archive/2005/Oct/12-964090.html>).

Ahmed Younis, director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, called the AMTFDR pledge effort a "cooperative attempt by the

American Muslim community to provide relief in the most efficient and most abundant manner possible for the brothers and sisters of humanity that have suffered as the result of the significant earthquake in South Asia."

and America."

Younis shared these sentiments, saying how the pledge "really underscores the importance of the charitable organizations of the American Muslim community."



Indian soldier distributes kerosene to survivors of Saturday's South Asian earthquake wait for the distribution of relief materials in Poonch, 250 km (156 miles) north west of the northern Indian city of Jammu in Indian-administered Kashmir

A second leader who also spoke at the press conference, Sayyid Syeed, who is the secretary-general of the Islamic Society of North America, reminded journalists that the earthquake struck during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. "Muslims are in the mood of giving" and will be especially motivated to respond to relief efforts during Ramadan, he said.

Syeed said the tragedy has created an excellent opportunity to improve the American image in the Muslim world. The AMTFDR, he said, is "most qualified to establish bridges between the Muslim world

reach the affected area within one hour after the earthquake hit. The release also noted that their organization immediately allocated \$4 million to Pakistan following the disaster.

Mohamed Aboulmagd, a representative of the organization, told those at the press conference that the AMTFDR task force is a "good step" toward improving cooperation among American Muslims.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations' government relations director, Corey Saylor, agreed with Aboulmagd on the need to mobi-

Another AMTFDR member organization, Islamic Relief USA, is also a member of the U. N. Economic and Social Council and has operated development projects in Pakistan since 1992. With three offices near the earthquake-affected areas, in Islamabad, Neelum Valley, and Muzafarabad, Islamic Relief announced in a statement released at the press conference that their emergency response team was able to

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Liberia's Elections Conducted Fairly . . .

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officials, who implemented voting procedures fairly and accurately. All appropriately documented voters who showed up at the polling places observed were allowed to vote. At all polling stations there were numerous party representatives and Liberian national observers overseeing the voting in a manner that did not in any way appear to interfere with or influence voting.

The Liberian people are to be commended for their enthusiastic and generally very patient and orderly participation in the electoral process. Turnout appeared to be very heavy at all polling places visited. The delegation observed voters waiting patiently in line for up to 12 hours to cast their votes for president, vice president, senators, and representative to the House. At a few polling stations where orderly lines were not organized, either due to lack of space or fore-

sight on the part of elections officials, there was some commotion as persons tried to ensure their ability to vote in their appropriate turn. Liberian National Police and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) forces responded quickly to polling stations where such crowd organization issues resulted in commotion and they were effective in restoring order and establishing an orderly process for voting.

The Official Delegation and U.S. Embassy observers witnessed vote counting at several polling stations following the closing of polls. Numerous procedures for reconciling ballots used and displaying ballots for counting were observed. In all cases, the national observers and party officials appeared to be satisfied that ballots were counted and accounted for accurately. It is the view of the Official U.S. Observer Delegation that the procedures observed for reconciling the number

of ballots used and for counting of ballots resulted in an accurate vote count. The Delegation urges all Liberians to accept the results of the election.

The U.S. Official Observer Delegation wishes to congratulate the Liberian people for holding a violence-free election and wishes to thank the Liberian National Elections Commission and UNMIL for their excellent organizational efforts. The Delegation would also like to commend the outstanding work done by the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, the Carter Center, and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, in supporting the preparation of these elections.

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

Muslim Americans Pledge \$20 Million for South Asian . . .

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lize and cooperate. He said that although providing relief is not the purpose of his organization, "our faith compels us to help out in humanitarian events."

Zahid Bukhari, chairman of ICNA (Islamic Circle of North America) Relief since 1996, extended the feeling of community and invited the rest of America to join in and take action. He said that he is "very much confident that the whole America will respond, as they've responded to previous national and international tragedies."

In addition to announcing their pledge, the leaders also presented a letter addressed to President Bush advocating the formation of an ad hoc committee composed of U.S. governmental and American Muslim nongovernmental relief agencies to offer coordinated relief to earthquake victims.

The AMTFDR, originally formed as a response to Hurricane Katrina, is joining earthquake relief efforts by mobilizing its member organizations into a permanent coalition. Member organizations include Hidayah Foundation, North American Islamic Trust, Indian Muslim Relief

Committee, Islamic Relief Worldwide, ICNA Relief, Kind Hearts, Life for Relief and Development, Islamic Society of Greater Houston, Zakat Foundation, Council on American-Islamic Relations, Islamic Society of North America, Muslim Alliance in North America, Muslim American Society, National Council of Pakistani Americans, Muslim Public Affairs Council, Muslim Ummah of North America, and Freedom and Justice Foundation.

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

Urgently Needed Food Rushed to Central America's Hurricane Victims

By Eric Green
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The international community has joined the United States in providing urgently needed assistance to thousands of hard-hit hurricane victims in remote areas of Guatemala and El Salvador.

In an October 13 statement, the United Nations' World Food Program (WFP) said it is providing high-energy biscuits to people in the two countries' affected communities, which had been cut off without assistance for up to four days after being hit by Hurricane Stan. The WFP said the high-energy biscuits will keep people going until the agency can provide more substantial sustenance.

The WFP said that in the continuing aftermath of torrential rains and ensuing landslides in the Guatemalan highlands, 652 people in Guatemala now are confirmed dead and thousands missing, while entire villages have been declared mass graves by their few surviving inhabitants.

The U.N. agency has provided 1,600 tons of food to the Guatemalan government, enough to feed some 70,000 families.

In El Salvador, the WFP has provided food to 77,000 people staying in shelters and other communities. Some 70,000 people have been evacuated to more than 600 shelters following the flooding and



Guatemalan army soldiers fill a U.S. Army Chinook helicopter with relief supplies bound for flood victims, in Guatemala City October 12, 2005.

an earlier eruption of the Volcano Santa Ana in El Salvador, which killed 74 people.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has announced it has donated almost \$400,000 in emergency aid to Guatemala, and \$100,000 each to El Salvador and Mexico, to help victims recover from Hurricane Stan. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/wh/Archive/2005/Oct/13-743992.html>.)

USAID also is providing \$50,000 in disaster assistance to Costa Rica, where heavy rains killed at least eight people and displaced another 1,600. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-eng-lish&y=2005&m=October&x=20051004152257ASrelliM0.6251032&t=wh/wh-latest.html>.)

The U.S. Department of Defense said October 11 it has sent nine helicopters to Guatemala, with another six helicopters expected in the region in coming days, while four C-130 aircraft were airlifting emergency supplies into devastated areas. Supplies being airlifted to Guatemala include food, water, plastic sheeting and medical supplies. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/wh/Archive/2005/Oct/13-10069.html>.)

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) also is providing urgent aid to the affected Central American region. The IDB said October 12 it has approved two grants of \$200,000 each to Guatemala and El Salvador to help the hurricane victims.

Officials say the floods and landslides caused by the hurricane have resulted in the worst natural disaster to hit Central America since Hurricane Mitch struck the region in 1998.

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

New Monument Honors American Pioneers of Volunteer Service

By Christine A. Terada
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – Prominent Americans who helped create enduring change across the United States were honored October 14th at the unveiling of the "Extra Mile -- Points of Light Volunteer Pathway" in downtown Washington.

The "Extra Mile – Points of Light Volunteer Pathway" is a one-mile walking path made up of 42 large medallions embedded in the sidewalk. Each medallion commemorates an honoree and bears a sculpted image of the honoree, a description of his or her achievement and an inspirational quotation.

Those immortalized at the opening include: 19th century slavery abolitionist Frederick Douglass; Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross; Martin Luther King Jr., Nobel laureate and civil rights leader; Helen Keller, advocate for the blind and founder of the American Foundation for the Blind; Harriet Tubman, leader of the Underground Railroad that aided those escaping slavery in the 19th century; and Cesar Chavez, co-founder of the United Farm Workers of America.

Other honorees include founders of humanitarian service organizations like Habitat for Humanity, Rotary International, Goodwill Industries, and Easter Seals. District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams, political commentator Cokie Roberts, and artist Thomas Kinkade joined former President George Herbert Walker Bush for the dedication ceremony.



The honorees are chosen by an independent nine-member selection committee. From founders of major service organizations to leaders of the civil rights and suffrage movements, the 20 initial honorees "championed causes to help others realize a better America. Their legacies are enduring social movements that continue to engage and inspire us today," according to the Points of Light Foundation, a privately funded organization based in Washington.

Former President Bush told those who attended the event that, "any definition of a successful life must include service to others. At a time when Americans are volunteering in unprecedented numbers to help their fellow citizens who have fallen victim to hurricanes Katrina and Rita, it is fitting that we dedicate a permanent tribute to the spirit of service in America. My hope is that this monument will serve to inspire similar commitment in all those who visit the Extra Mile over the generations to come."

The monument is an initiative of the Points of Light Foundation and is funded entirely by private sources. "We are thrilled to see this monument become a reality and to recognize the contributions of such heroic Americans," said Robert Goodwin, president and chief executive officer of the

Points of Light Foundation. "Their legacy epitomizes the spirit of service in America and provides an inspiring example of how we all have the ability to go the extra mile for our fellow citizens."

The monument, with a design that allows for future expansion with room for 70 medallions, is expected to receive more than 1.7 million visitors per year.

The Extra Mile monument, the organization explains on its Web site, aims not only to honor America's pioneers in the volunteer movement, but also to build support for volunteering, offer America's youth the chance to emulate positive role models and inspire the next generation of leaders in the volunteering and philanthropic sectors.

The Extra Mile ultimately will include service learning, commemorative coins and medals and online interactive components that aim to spread the values of service in America.

Points of Light Foundation is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to engaging and mobilizing people in volunteer service to solve social problems in thousands of communities.

More information on the foundation (<http://www.pointsoflight.org/>) is available on its Web site.

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

U.S. Officials Outline Efforts To Curb Illegal Immigration

By Scott Miller
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Illegal immigration is a severe and growing problem, and the United States is taking aggressive and innovative steps to address it, says U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff.

In October 18 testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Chertoff told lawmakers that ending illegal immigration requires tough law enforcement, as well as action to reduce the demand that draws illegal migrants into the country.

U.S. officials believe a three-tier comprehensive approach to curbing illegal immigration is necessary, Chertoff added. This approach involves establishing better control of the border, a more robust interior enforcement program and a Temporary Worker Program (TWP) that would match willing employers with willing workers.

Chertoff said that since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, U.S. annual spending on border security and immigration enforcement has increased dramatically. With these funds, he said, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has added 1,649 patrol agents along U.S. borders and 4,533 officers at ports of entry since 2001.

The secretary explained that the Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill signed by President Bush October 18 will allocate \$940 million in new resources for homeland security law enforcement agencies to strengthen further border security and immigration enforce-

ment. These new resources will support additional personnel, technology and infrastructure -- and should deliver benefits in the near future, Chertoff said. (See White House fact sheet (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/10/20051018-3.html>) on appropriations bill.)

"I am convinced that we can soon make dramatic improvements in the use of technology, infrastructure, and our rapidly growing enforcement team," he said.

Chertoff said he anticipates a fairly rapid improvement in the removal of illegal immigrants from the United States. Currently, he said, apprehensions of illegal immigrants exceed removals.

The secretary explained that whereas the 900,000 illegal Mexican immigrants caught entering the United States each year immediately are returned to Mexico, only 30,000 of 160,000 non-Mexican nationals apprehended were removed from the United States. This so-called "catch and release" practice, he said, encourages illegal immigration, and efforts are under way to end it, he said.

"We must end 'catch and release' and implement 'catch and return,'" he said. "In fact, we are already taking steps to implement 'catch and return' as I speak."

Chertoff said that homeland security is expanding removals by making better use of detention and removal assets. He testified that he has set a goal for complete removal of the "catch and release" practice, without exceptions. The secretary said he expects that significant progress can be made to-

ward this goal during the remainder of 2005.

As efforts to streamline removal of people caught crossing U.S. borders illegally move forward, Chertoff said, immigration enforcement within the United States' interior -- including worksite enforcement -- also must improve. He indicated that more robust efforts at interior enforcement are under way, and better cooperation with federal, state and local partners should improve immigration enforcement overall.

OFFICIALS CALL FOR "WELL-DESIGNED" TEMPORARY WORKER PROGRAM

With an increase in the effectiveness of border security and immigration enforcement, Chertoff said, a TWP also will be necessary to augment these efforts.

"The effectiveness of our border security and interior enforcement initiatives is closely tied to creating a workable TWP," he said. "A well-designed TWP will provide legal channels for U.S. employers and foreign-born workers to meet the needs of a vibrant and successful U.S. economy without disadvantaging American workers."

Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, who also testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee, agreed with Chertoff's assessment.

"An improved temporary worker program will enhance border security and interior enforcement by providing a workable and enforceable process for hiring foreign temporary workers," she said.

Chao noted that a reformed worker program should allow those

(Continued on page 21)

Vote Shows Iraqis Are Committed to Democratic Process, Rice Says

By Howard Cincotta
Washington File Special Correspondent

Washington – The large number of Iraqis who voted on the country's draft constitution signifies that the base of political participation has expanded, and that Iraqis have chosen the democratic process as the way to a better future, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in several television news interviews October 15 and October 16.

CONSTITUTIONAL VOTE

On NBC's Meet the Press with Tim Russert, Rice observed that perhaps as many as a million more Iraqis voted in the October 15 constitutional referendum than participated in the elections for the Transitional National Assembly in January. The turnout apparently included large numbers of Sunnis, she said.

"Whatever happens with the referendum, the Iraqis people are now invested in the political process to make their views known, and that's bad news for the terrorists," Rice said on Fox News Sunday with Chris Wallace.

Rice refused to speculate about whether the referendum to approve the constitution would pass, but she rejected the argument that its defeat also would mean a defeat for democracy in Iraq.

"If it passes, then democracy has been served. If, for some reason it does not, then democracy has been served," she said on Meet the Press. "The key here is the Sunnis have voted in large num-

bers. That means they're casting their lot now with the democratic process."



An Iraqi man casts his vote in the constitutional referendum as his wife waits for her turn at a polling station in Baghdad October 15, 2005.

Rejection of the constitution requires a two-thirds "no" vote in three of Iraq's 18 provinces, and initial, unofficial results suggested that the referendum was passing, according to news reports.

Election officials estimated an overall turnout of 61 percent of eligible voters, the Associated Press reported. The New York Times reported that the Sunni turnout varied, with large numbers voting in cities like Mosul, but much lower in Ramadi, where insurgent violence and threats have been intense.

Turnout among the Shiite and Kurdish communities, which overwhelmingly support the proposed constitution, appeared to be consistently high, according to news accounts.

Speaking from Baghdad on CNN

Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer, Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, said more than 9 million Iraqis voted in the referendum, "and the Sunnis were full-fledged participants."

Khalilzad said success in Iraq requires two elements: a political process that includes all Iraqis, and a security system that can protect Iraqi citizens. "Yesterday, on both scores, significant progress was demonstrated," he said.

DEFEATING VIOLENCE

Rice acknowledged that a successful constitutional referendum does not mean an end to violence in Iraq. But the terrorists have shown they are unable to stop the political process, she added.

"There is no political base any longer for this insurgency," she said on Fox News Sunday. "The Sunnis are joining the base of this broad political process. That will ultimately undo this insurgency."

Rice also pointed to the growing strength of the Iraqi security forces in a London BBC interview on October 15. "The Iraqi security forces are getting better," she said. "They are getting trained. They are going to be capable of stepping up and taking on these violent people."

Overall violence on election day was scattered and relatively minor, according to news accounts, and there were no reported deaths among Iraqi voters.

However, five U.S. soldiers were

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Vote Shows Iraqis Are Committed to Democratic Process . . .

(Continued from page 15)

reported killed by a roadside bomb in Ramadi, west of Baghdad, which has been a center of insurgent violence. Earlier, coalition forces, acting on intelligence and citizen tips, detained 24 terrorists and killed at least 12 others in October 14 raids in the Ramadi area, according to U.S. military sources.

On CNN Late Edition, Khalilzad commended the performance of Iraqi security forces, noting that the coalition and Iraqi officials had information that insurgents were preparing significant efforts to disrupt the elections, but failed.

"Part of the credit clearly [goes] to the efforts of the security forces," he said.

DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

Rice expressed optimism about Iraq's future, saying that "...we have ahead of us the prospect, and I think the very good prospect,

of a foundation for a democratic and prosperous Iraq that can solve its differences by politics and compromise, that becomes an anchor for a Middle East that is changing."

"If you look at Lebanon and you look at the Palestinian Territories and you look at what is going on in Egypt," she said on Meet the Press, "this is a Middle East that is in transformation to something far better than we have experienced for the last 60 years when we thought that we could ignore democracy and get stability and, in fact, we got neither."

In her BBC interview, Rice said, "Let's give the Iraqis a vote of confidence and their due. They have gone out in large numbers to vote despite threats, they have gone out in large numbers to vote a second time despite large threats, and they will do so again in December [for a new government]."

For more information on U.S. policy, see Iraq's Political Process (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq/political_process.html).

Transcripts of Rice's interviews on BBC (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/55167.htm>), Meet the Press (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/55171.htm>) and Fox News Sunday (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/55170.htm>), and Khalilzad's interview on CNN's Late Edition (<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0510/16/le.01.html>) are available on the State Department's Web site.

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

Former State Dept. Official Sees "Five African Lions" . . .

Cohen has continued to work in African affairs as president of Cohen and Woods International, a strategic planning firm that represents African governments and multinational corporations. He remains optimistic about the continent, despite "the disappointments of Zimbabwe and Côte d'Ivoire."

Moreover, he continues to hold high hopes for the five lions: "Between

now and 2015, if Africa can produce the equivalent of five Asian tigers, we can declare victory."

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

World Food Day To Be Celebrated October 16

By Charles W. Corey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Agriculture and intercultural dialogue are the themes of this year's World Food Day, which is celebrated every October 16 in 150 countries worldwide to mark the founding 60 years ago of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Michael Hage, the North American regional information officer for FAO, discussed some of the events taking place at an October 13 briefing at the U.S. Foreign Press Center in New York.

Hage told reporters that as World Food Day 2005 is celebrated, more than 850 million people around the world remain hungry. At the World Food Summit held in Rome in 1996 and again at the World Food Summit five years later in 2002, he recalled, leaders vowed to cut that number in half by 2015.

Moreover, he said, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals commit world leaders to reduce the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by half by 2015 while sustaining environmental quality.

Asked by reporters about the progress that has been made on accomplishing those goals, he said, "At the present rate, we will not reach the 2015 goal until 2150, so we need to do more."

Commenting on the intercultural theme of the 2005 World Food Day, Hage reminded everyone that the movement of crops and livestock breeds enhanced diets and reduced poverty worldwide.

"Africa gave the world coffee, now a popular beverage worldwide and a mainstay of Latin American agriculture. Asia domesticated rice, today the staple food for over half the world's population, and sugar cane, a major cash crop in many regions. The introduction of the camel to Africa from Arabia allowed people to live and travel in more extreme environments and contributed meat and milk to diets."

All of this happened centuries ago, he said.

CURRENT AGRICULTURAL TRENDS

Assessing agricultural trends today, he said FAO statistics show that at the start of the new millennium, more than 2.5 billion people depended on agriculture -- hunting, fishing or forestry -- for their livelihoods. Including those actively engaged in those activities and their nonworking dependents, they represent 42 percent of all human beings.

"Agriculture powers the economies of most developing countries," he said. "In industrialized countries, agriculture exports were only worth about \$290 billion in 2001. Historically, very few countries have experienced rapid economic growth and poverty reduction that has not been either preceded or accompanied by agricultural growth," he added.

Intercultural dialogue in the broadest sense occurs every time people from different cultures meet and listen to one another's point of view, he said.

"In agriculture, this takes place through travel and migration, international institutions, and meetings and trade negotiations. It occurs every time an expert from one culture shows an expert from another something new in the lab or field and gets feedback on its appropriateness in the local setting," he said.

BIRD FLU

Asked what the FAO is doing about avian influenza, Hage called the situation "a crisis that we have been working on for some time now. We've been arguing that we need ... to deal with bird flu as an animal disease issue before it becomes a human disease [and] becomes a lot costlier. We are monitoring the situation very closely.

"We are working with member-states at the regional and national levels. We are working with them to put in place mechanisms to detect the problem early on and provide them with the expertise on what needs to be done." Hage said the FAO has launched an appeal for \$150 million to help developing countries do exactly what needs to be done to prevent bird flu from becoming a human pandemic. (See also Bird Flu (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html).)

Asked about the recent earthquake in Pakistan, Hage said FAO has issued an appeal for \$7 million to bring seeds, tools and livestock needed by affected farmers so they can again be self-sufficient. "Food aid is important, but it doesn't last very long," he said. "We need to get families ... on their way to meet the require-

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United States Reaffirms Commitment To Combat Hunger

The United States reaffirms its commitment to international goals to reduce world hunger, joining the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in recognition of World Food Day October 16.

The event annually commemorates the founding of the FAO in 1945 and its contribution to world food security.

The United States provides more than 60 percent of emergency international food aid, according to a media note issued by the U.S. State Department October 14, a total of \$2.16 billion in assistance in 2004.

The statement also calls on the world to work toward "durable approaches to chronic hunger and rural poverty." The U.S. Agency for International Development works in many nations to help local people boost agricultural production and stimulate economic growth in rural areas.

The text of the statement follows:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
For Immediate Release
October 14, 2005

Media Note

World Food Day: The U.S. Commitment to Reducing World Hunger

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) celebrates World Food Day each year on October 16, the day on which the Organization was founded in 1945. This year's celebration coincides with the 60th anniversary of the FAO. The United

States congratulates and thanks FAO for its contribution to world food security.

President Bush views the alleviation of hunger and poverty throughout the world as a moral



imperative. On this World Food Day, the United States reaffirms its continuing commitment to the World Food Summit and the Millennium Development Goals.

The American people have long been providing generous humanitarian assistance. More than 850 million people around the world remain hungry. In the United States, 450 national private voluntary organizations sponsor World Food Day, reflecting the broad concern and generosity of the American people in alleviating global hunger. More than 60 percent of emergency international food aid comes as a gift from the people of the United States. In FY 2004, the U.S. provided \$2.16 billion

worth of food aid. Most recently, in June of this year, President Bush announced \$674 million of additional resources to respond to humanitarian emergencies in Africa. Yet our greatest challenge is not simply to treat the results of hunger, but to address its causes, and that is why we are working hard to develop more durable approaches to chronic hunger and rural poverty.

The United States is a leader in addressing the causes of hunger, as well as this year's theme for World Food Day, "Agriculture and Intercultural Dialogue." The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) continues to put a high priority on helping developing countries increase their agricultural productivity and stimulate economic growth in rural areas. We are the largest contributor to the multilateral lending banks, and encourage them to focus on agricultural growth in areas where hunger is greatest.

The elimination of trade barriers could lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty over the next 15 years, so we must bring the Doha trade talks to a successful conclusion. The United States is ready to eliminate all tariffs, subsidies and other barriers to free flow of goods and services as other nations do the same.

On the occasion of World Food Day, as we renew our commitment to feeding the hungry, let us also reaffirm our determination to find the lasting answers that go hand in hand with peace, democracy, opportunity, and education. ♦

Officials Urge Calm in Face of Bird Flu Spread

By Charlene Porter
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – A flu virus that has killed millions of birds in Asia now has appeared in birds in Europe, but the World Health Organization (WHO) reports that Turkey and Romania have mounted aggressive responses to destroy flocks infected with H5N1.

In a WHO telephone briefing from Geneva October 17, health officials predicted that the virus could appear in other neighboring nations, which have become increasingly watchful since confirmation of the first European appearance of the virus October 13. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-eng-lish&y=2005&m=October&x=20051013165046cmretrop0.4708979&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html>).

"There's no question that we will expect further outbreaks of avian disease in different countries," said Dr. Michael Ryan, from WHO's Department of Epidemic and Pandemic Alert and Response.

Asia is still the place where the greatest opportunity exists for the virus to cross the species barrier and become a disease that easily is passed among people.

Asians are more likely than Europeans to have domestic poultry in and around their homes, experts say, increasing the chances for exposure to the virus in bird droppings or mucus.

"It's compressed and concentrated here more than anywhere else," said Alejandro Thiermann of

the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), in an interview with Reuters in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Thiermann was a member of a U.S.-U.N. delegation that toured several Southeast Asian nations in mid-October, raising governments' awareness about the dangers of H5N1 and its potential to set off a human influenza pandemic that could cause millions of deaths.

In some nations where officials have heightened awareness of the possibility of pandemic, plans are being made to build drug stockpiles, test human vaccines and develop contingencies in case of widespread illness that might disrupt workplaces and manufacturing and economic activity.

Since a pandemic is most likely to begin in Asia, Thiermann said, concern about appearance of the virus in Europe should not distract from an effort to help Southeast Asian nations combat further disease in birds to prevent emergence of a disease that will pass easily among humans.

WHO has confirmed 117 human cases of H5N1 infection in four Asian nations, resulting in 60 deaths. Because access to medical care is poor in some rural areas and cases may go undiagnosed, the human count could be higher.

No human cases have appeared in Europe.

U.S. Health and Human Services



Europe has already been hit by the potentially lethal virus

Oct/14-552053.html).

While there, he signed agreements with the governments of Cambodia and Laos, pledging U.S. aid and assistance to establish stronger systems for tracking and containing disease.

In an interview with CNN while in Laos, Leavitt said attention to disease in that region today will protect the entire world in the future.

"You can think of the world as a vast forest that's dry and susceptible to fire. If there's a spark -- that is to say, there's a virus that is transmittable human to human -- if we get there soon enough, we're able to stomp it out, just like you are with a spark in a forest fire," Leavitt said.

"But if it's allowed to fester for a period of time," he added, "then it begins to grow and soon it's uncontrollable."

The United States is contributing both funds and expertise to assist in disease surveillance and detection in Southeast Asia.

For more information on U.S. and international efforts to combat avian influenza, see Bird Flu (http://usinfo.state.gov/global_issues/bird_flu.html). ♦

Polio Not Beaten Yet, but End in Sight, Panel Says

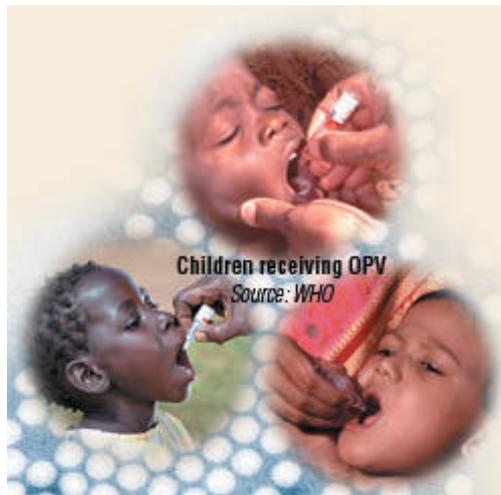
Polio is almost beaten in most nations where the virus occurs in the wild, but Nigeria remains the one risk to achieving a polio-free world, according to an assessment issued October 12 by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI).

The recently introduced monovalent (containing one virus-related component) oral polio vaccine (mOPV1), which accelerates protection to specific virus types, appears to have stopped polio transmission in Egypt and in many areas of India, two of the six nations where this crippling viral disease has not yet been eradicated.

The monovalent vaccine is more effective against the Type 1 virus, which is now the most prevalent. The older trivalent (containing three components) vaccine also attacks viral Type 2, eliminated since 1999, and Type 3, which now occurs only in limited areas.

The GPEI Advisory Committee on Polio Eradication announced in Geneva October 12 that "all the tools are now in place to finish polio

once and for all," said Dr. Steve Cochi, chair of the committee and director of the National Immunization Program (<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/>) at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a GPEI founding partner.



"It is now up to the remaining polio-affected countries to effectively use these tools," he said. "There is no reason why polio should continue to exist anywhere in the world after next year."

Since 1988, GPEI has worked to eradicate polio, reducing the annual number of cases from

350,000 to 1,349 so far in 2005. More cases have occurred in Nigeria in 2005 – 473 – than in any other country. (See the 2005 case count (<http://www.polioeradication.org/casecount.asp>) on GPEI Web site.)

The eradication effort also has been thwarted by the recurrence of disease in nations thought previously to have conquered it. According to GPEI, the following 10 nations experienced re-infections in 2004 and 2005: Somalia, Indonesia, Yemen, Angola, Ethiopia, Chad, Sudan, Mali, Eritrea and Cameroon.

The World Health Organization, Rotary International, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and UNICEF form the GPEI, which works to rid the world of polio. Further information (<http://www.polioeradication.org/>) is available on the organization's Web site.

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

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ments of the next season," he stressed. (See also U.S. Response to the Earthquake in South Asia (<http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/southasia/earthquake.html>)).

Commenting on the tsunami that struck Southeast Asia in December 2004, he said the FAO has had an extensive program to help people by restocking them with boats, nets and fishing gear and helping others "deal with the salinity in the soil as a result of the high seas and waves that intruded on their agricultural lands." The organization also has helped people produce fresh water. "So we're very, very actively engaged in the aftermath of the tsunami as well," he said. (See also U.

S. Response to Tsunami (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/recovery.html)).

For additional information on the United States' role in development assistance, see the August eJournal International Development Goals Moving Forward (<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/ites/0805/ijee/ijee0805.htm>).

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

U.S. Officials Outline Efforts To Curb Illegal Immigration. . .

(Continued from page 14)

workers who are in the United States illegally to come forward, apply for a legal temporary work status and participate in the legal economy. At the same time, she stressed that those workers who do come forward should not receive amnesty for their violations of law, but rather pay a fine or penalty to participate in the TWP.

"President Bush strongly opposes amnesty, because it unfairly rewards lawbreaking and because amnesty encourages further illegal immigration," she said.

Chao observed that felons and those workers in removal proceedings would not be eligible to participate in the TWP under Bush's proposed plan.

On the subject of matching will-

ing workers with U.S. employers, Chao said that while the private marketplace -- not the government -- is best suited for this role, the government will retain controls to prevent abuses such as excessive fees.

The labor secretary added that once workers are enrolled in a TWP, the Department of Labor would work to protect their labor rights.

"The Department of Labor takes very seriously its responsibility to ensure that our work force, including foreign workers admitted under temporary worker programs, is fully protected by our nation's labor laws," she said.

In conclusion, Chao told legislators that the Bush administration looks forward to working with the

U.S. Senate and House of Representatives in the coming months to craft a TWP that enhances U.S. security and prosperity.

"Reforming our temporary worker program is a difficult and complicated undertaking," she said. "Working together, I am confident that reforms will be enacted to protect homeland security, restore the rule of law, serve the economic needs of our nation, and honor our history of openness to legal immigration."

The testimonies of Chertoff (http://judiciary.senate.gov/testimony.cfm?id=1634&wit_id=66) and Chao (http://judiciary.senate.gov/testimony.cfm?id=1634&wit_id=4712) are available on the Senate Judiciary Committee's Web site. ♦