



# Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

## INSIDE

### LOCAL NEWS

Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) project completed ( P 4)

Lecture on Islam in America (P 4)

### BUSH VISIT TO AFRICA

Bush Explains Focus of Africa Military Command (P 5)

Bush Cites Positive Changes in Africa (P 7)

Bush Announces Multiple Initiatives in Rwanda (P 8)

Tanzania Gives Warm Welcome to President Bush, First Lady (P 10)

Bush Signs Nearly \$700 Million MCC Compact with Tanzania (P 11)

First Ladies Launch Orphan Care Plan for Tanzania (P 13)

Tanzanian Children To Receive Free Bed Nets, Bush Says (P 15)

Benin Visit Symbolizes U.S. Commitment to Africa (P 16)

### U.S. ELECTIONS 2008

Texas Enjoys Unexpected Attention in Presidential Primary Battle (P 18)

Turnout Mounts in U.S. Presidential Primaries (P 19)

Exchange Students Get Close-up View of American Primary Politics (P 20)

### AFRICAN NEWS

Kenya Crisis Needs To End Soon, Rice Says (P 21)

United States Leading Global Response To Crisis in Darfur, Sudan (P 22)

### INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

United States Recognizes Kosovo as Independent State (P 23)

U.S. Attorney General Visits Iraq To Support Legal System (P 24)

## Ethiopians Discuss Faith and the American Civil Rights Movement

It is not every day that one gets the chance to talk with a person who lived, worked, prayed, and struggled with Dr. Martin Luther King, but thousands of Ethiopian students, religious leaders, and ordinary people got to do just that with the Rev. Dr. Elbert Ransom who visited Ethiopia from February 1 – 13. A pioneer in the American Civil



*Dr. Ransom with members of the Amhara Regional State's Islamic Affairs Council*

Rights Movement, Dr. Ransom was born in the segregated South of the 1930s where African-Americans had to sit at the back of the bus, drink from separate water fountains, eat in separate sections of restaurants,

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Photo Exhibition "Building Islam in Detroit" Shows in Harar and Dire Dawa

A photo exhibition documenting the growth of Muslim communities in the American city of Detroit showed in Harar on February 6-8 at Amir Abdullahi Hall and in Dire Dawa on February 10-11 at the Municipal Library. The photo exhibition, "Building Islam in Detroit," looks at the diversity of Muslim American life and explores the architecture of the public

*(Continued on page 3)*



*Invited guests at the opening ceremony of the photo exhibition in Harar*

## Ethiopians Discuss Faith and the American Civil Rights Movement . . .

(Continued from page 1)

wait for trains and buses in separate waiting rooms, and speak and act toward police in ways that Whites did not have to act. Inspired by Dr. King, who Ransom met as a teenager in Montgomery, Alabama, and the example of Mrs. Rosa Parks, who refused to give up her bus seat to a white man, Dr. Ransom became an enthusiastic participant in the Civil Rights Movement, working for and with Dr. King right up until his assassination. In doing so, he became a living link for today's new generation of young people around the world who want to learn from the American struggle to advance the rights of African-Americans to live in peace, dignity, and with equal rights before the law.

During his visit, Dr. Ransom met with His Holiness, Abouna Paulos, and His Excellency, Sheikh Elias Redman, as well as many religious leaders and clergymen from the Christian and Muslim communities.

Speaking in Addis Ababa, as well as traveling to Harar, Bahir Dar, and Gondar, Rev. Ransom spoke to students, religious leaders, and ordinary townspeople about how faith communities in America worked together for social change, setting aside their theological differences in the interests of advancing human rights and fighting social injustices. Because of the moral challenges presented by segregation in America, Jews and Christians and Muslims, Blacks and Whites, came together to work for a common cause without letting their religious differences keep them from uniting for the cause of justice and social



*The clergy at Gondar Debre-Birhan Selassie Church performing the Ethiopian Orthodox Church chant to Dr. Ransom & Public Affairs Officer Michael McClellan*

change. Great people from all three faith traditions even gave their lives during the Civil Rights Movement and their example inspires us to this day to set aside religious differences and work together on the basis of our shared values.

Throughout Dr. Ransom's visit, he continually stressed that "we are all created by God and God is inside each of us," the basis, he says, for giving Muslims and Christians and Jews the impetus to work together to make society more just and humane. Whatever our theological differences, he said, these three great faiths – indeed all religions! –

teach common shared values that can drive an agenda for positive social change in every society.

At the conclusion of his visit, Dr. Ransom said, "Everywhere I went in Ethiopia, I found many, many people of goodwill, both Christian and Muslim, who are ready to work together to address the challenges of poverty and social justice. As an African-American, who does not know where in Africa his ancestors came from, I truly feel like I have found my spiritual home." ♦

## Photo Exhibition “Building Islam in Detroit” Shows in Harar and Dire Dawa . . .

(Continued from page 1)

and private spaces Muslims have built in Detroit since they first began to arrive in the 1890s. An interdisciplinary team of architects, historians, sociologists and anthropologists from the University of Michigan prepared a multimedia presentation from many traditions in greater Detroit including African-American, Albanian, Syrian, Iraqi, Yemeni and, most recently, Bangladeshi. Roughly 150,000 Muslims live in greater Detroit and worship in over 50 mosques.

Mayor Arif Mohammed Haj and U.S. Speaker Rev. Elbert Ransom opened the exhibit in Harar. Over 800 people visited the exhibition, including students, teachers, government officials, religious leaders and businessmen and women. They appreciated the exhibition, expressing pleasure that the exhibition shows American Muslim life so well. The exhibition, some suggested, was educational and could herald the beginning of greater understanding and exchange of culture between the U.S. and Ethiopia. Another commented that the exhibition showed that good communication was necessary for people to live together with tolerance and harmony.



*Dr. Elbert Ransom making opening remarks at the photo exhibition in Harar*

than 600 people attended the exhibition. Many visitors expressed pleasure that American Muslims were free to worship in mosques and were not being persecuted. Some noted that mosques in America had become not only places of worship, but community centers as well, and thought that Muslim Ethiopians could benefit by developing social activities for Muslim youth as has happened in Detroit.

The photo exhibition will show in Addis Ababa from February 25-29 at the Municipality Hall, in Jimma



*Partial view of photo exhibition*

Ato Mesrak Worku, Head of Information and Public Relations in the Bureau of Culture, and Cultural Attaché, Patricia Johnson, opened the exhibition in Dire Dawa, where it was equally well received. More

from March 13-15 and in Bahir Dar from March 27-29. Following Ethiopia, the exhibition will travel to Pakistan and Sudan. ♦

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## Cultural Attaché gave lecture on Islam in America



*Cultural Attaché Patricia Johnson speaking to Dire Dawa University Students*

Cultural Attaché, Patricia Johnson, presented her lecture on “Islam in America: An Historical Perspective,” to 100 students and faculty at Dire Dawa University on February 11, 2008, and to 35 secondary School students, teachers and the media at the Harar Teachers Training College

on February 9, 2008. Mrs. Johnson discussed early Islamic contact with the Americas, including the arrival of Muslims through the slave trade, the development of Islamic-inspired groups such as the Moorish-American Science Temple, immigration of peoples from the Otto-

man Empire in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and more recent immigration policies that have permitted the immigration of many Muslims to the United States, including many Muslim Ethiopians as immigrants and refugees. She touched on possible early Muslim Ethiopian contact with the Americas and concluded with a discussion of the post 9/11 climate for Muslims living in the United States. Participants asked thoughtful questions including what the political views of American Muslims were. The Cultural Attaché responded with a discussion of the results of the Council of American Islamic Relations’ recent survey on the topic, mentioning that, according to the survey, anti-Americanism abroad affects the lives of Muslims living in the U.S. Other members of the audience wondered why history emphasized Columbus as the discoverer of America when evidence suggests earlier Muslim contact with the Americas. This was followed by a discussion of the limited impact of early Muslim contact between the New and Old Worlds. ♦

## Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation Project Completed

The 2005 project of the Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation was the rehabilitation and conservation of Dirre Sheikh Hussein shrine in Bale, Oromia. Although the project was dedicated at the Millennium Arafa celebration at Dirre Sheikh Hussein on December 19, 2007, the crowd of pilgrims prevented documentation of the completion of the work. On February 13 Omar Sheikh Aliyu showed the restoration and conservation work to Cultural Attaché Patricia Johnson and Cultural Affairs Assistant Lensa Mekonnen. He expressed his appreciation to the U.S. Embassy for its support for the shrine. ♦



*AFCP fund replaced the roof of the Sheikh Hussein Shrine in Bale*

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## Bush Explains Focus of Africa Military Command

Accra, Ghana -- President Bush, during his five-nation tour of Africa, took the opportunity at a stop in Ghana to explain how the new Africa Command (AFRICOM) is a part of his administration's strategy "to support African leaders to deal with Africa's problems."

In a press availability at Osu Castle with Ghanaian President John Kufuor February 20, Bush said, "I know there is a controversial subject brewing around that is not very well understood, and that's 'Why would America stand up what's called AFRICOM?'"

"I want to dispel the notion that all of a sudden America is bringing all kinds of military to Africa. It's just simply not true. This is a way of making our command relevant to the strategy that we have put in place," Bush said.

AFRICOM represents a unique command structure, the president explained. "It is a command structure that is aiming to help provide military assistance to African nations so African nations are more capable of dealing with Africa's conflicts -- like peace-keeping training."

Obviously, Bush said, "we have got an issue in Darfur [Sudan] that we all have to work together to solve. I am very pleased that the AU [African Union] and the U.N. hybrid force should be moving in there -- I would like to see it move in there quicker -- but the whole purpose of

AFRICOM is to help [African] leaders deal with African problems."

"We do not contemplate adding new bases," the president stressed. "The purpose of this is not to add military bases." Bush sought to dispel incorrect press reports and rumors in Ghana, which said he was seeking to build a base in Ghana. "That's baloney," he said.



*President Bush speaks at a news conference with Ghana's President John Agyekum Kufuor at Osu Castle in Accra, Ghana, February 20, 2008. REUTERS/Jim Young*

Bush said that in his talks with President Kufuor, the Ghanaian leader told him, "'You are not going to build any military bases in Ghana'" -- to which Bush said he replied, "I understand, nor do we want to."

Bush quickly added that this does not mean that AFRICOM might not want to establish an office somewhere in Africa, and he repeated again that AFRICOM is a "new concept."

### NEW TROPICAL DISEASE INITIATIVE

Bush also announced a \$350 million initiative over five years to target neglected tropical diseases such as hookworm and river blindness. "This is all part of our initiative -- whether it be on HIV/AIDS or malaria -- to help save lives," he said.

Additionally, Bush announced that the United States is spending nearly \$17 million to help Ghana in its fight against malaria.

On the subject of China's influence in Africa, Bush said: "I don't view Africa as a zero-sum for China and the United States. I think we can pursue agendas without pursuing a great sense of competition." Bush added that he does not view China as a "fierce competitor" on the continent.

The policy of the United States, he said, is aimed at "helping people. Trade helps people," he said, and that is why completing the so-called Doha round of international trade talks successfully is so important.

Bush did say that he presumed African leaders would impose high standards -- such as requiring the employment of local workers, imposing environmental protections and protections against undue exploitation -- on China or any other country bringing investment capital

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Bush Explains Focus of Africa Military Command . . .

(Continued from page 5)

to the continent. That is the way it should be in dealing with any country, he said. "The United States is willing to live with those standards. We believe in those standards," he said.

In his comments, Kufuor thanked Bush for refuting the incorrect rumors about AFRICOM and any notion that the United States is intending to build military bases on the continent.

"I believe the explanation the president has given should" put an end to the speculation, he said, so the relationship between Ghana and the United States will grow even stronger in the future.

Additionally, he thanked Bush for creating a fund to fight neglected diseases in Africa. Kufuor said his government -- like others in Africa -- is committed to fighting such maladies but lacks the resources to do so effectively.

Turning to malaria, Kufuor said he read that morning in a newspaper that malaria might kill more people in Ghana than HIV/AIDS and, for that reason, he thanked Bush for his announcement of \$17 million to fight malaria in Ghana. "So any help we can get in our fight to contain and eradicate this disease should be most welcome to the people of Ghana," he said.

Bush was greeted on his arrival at Osu Castle -- the seat of government in Ghana -- by Kufuor and an honor guard clad in gray and light-blue-trimmed uniforms while traditional musicians played in the background. The castle, which was built in the 1600s, is located in Ac-

The USAID Trade Hub in Accra works with another USAID trade hub in Dakar, Senegal, through the African Global Competitiveness Initiative (AGCI) to facilitate trade in 21 West African countries across the region.



*President George W. Bush and Ghana President John Agyekum Kufuor laugh together during their meeting at Osu Castle, Wednesday, Feb. 20, 2008 in Accra, Ghana. White House photo by Eric Draper*

cra on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean's Gulf of Guinea.

After leaving Osu Castle, President Bush lunched with Peace Corps volunteers to commemorate Ghana's being the first country to receive Peace Corps assistance. The president also visited with beneficiaries of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) West Africa Trade Hub.

The regional trade hubs -- which also are in Nairobi, Kenya, and Gaborone, Botswana -- facilitate trade between the United States and the region under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which allows a range of products to be exported duty free into the United States.

The four trade hubs serve as the central point where business, government and finance can gather to promote economic growth and development.

Later, Bush attended a tee ball, or baseball, game, played by small children. The game, which occasionally is played on the grounds of the White House, came to the West African country courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps.

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

## Bush Cites Positive Changes in Africa

Accra, Ghana -- Africa has changed "in a very positive way" since President Bush first took office seven years ago, he said in Ghana February 20. He attributed that positive change to the work of African leaders.

"There were six regional conflicts when I was elected president," Bush said at a press conference with Ghanaian President John Kufuor. "Take Liberia, for example. It was a real issue and a real problem, along with Nigeria. With John's advice for example, I made some decisions along with other leaders that helped put in place the first democratically elected woman [president] in the continent's history," Bush said, referring to Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

Bush said he is traveling to Liberia February 21 -- the last stop on a five-nation trip that has also taken him to Benin, Tanzania, Rwanda and Ghana -- to herald the success that the Sirleaf government has achieved and to reaffirm the U.S. commitment to help with further progress.

"Conflict resolution has been taking place [across Africa] and the United States has not tried to impose its will," Bush said. "We have just tried to be a useful partner, like in Eastern Congo, for example -- working with the presidents of Rwanda, Congo and Burundi to bring peace

to that region."

"Democracy is making progress across the continent of Africa," he added.

One reason conflict resolution and democracy now are moving forward, he said, is "because there are



*President George Bush reacts as he watches a Ghana Little league T-ball game between the Little Saints (pictured) and the Little Dragons, at the Ghana International School, 02/20/08. TERS/Jason Reed (Reuters)*

leaders like Ghanaian President John Kufuor."

In Africa, the United States has helped end conflicts in Sierra Leone, Angola and Burundi, he said, and long has been working for peace in Sudan's Darfur region.

Bush also said the positive momentum achieved in Africa has been aided by changes his administration has implemented in U.S. assistance programs. The old programs, he said, for the most part provided funds with few restrictions. That has changed, he said, to today's

situation, where "we expect there to be certain habits in place, like fighting corruption or investing in the education of children."

Bush said that although tough accountability questions had not been asked in the past, he was "confident" in asking nations to adhere to such principles because "I believe in setting high standards for African leaders. I am confident in the capacity of the leaders I have met."

Bush also reiterated his belief that U.S. development assistance is central to America's national security, foreign policy interests and well-being, and his administration has launched major initiatives in Africa on malaria, education and HIV/AIDS treatment and novel development programs such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation in which countries basically de-

velop their own development plans and then ask for U.S. help.

Since taking office, Bush has more than doubled U.S. development assistance from about \$10 billion in 2000 to \$23 billion in 2006. That makes it the largest increase in development aid since the United States launched the Marshall Plan after World War II to aid in the reconstruction of Europe.

On this trip -- his second to Africa as president -- Bush said, the leaders of the countries he visited or

*(Continued on page 14)*

## Bush Announces Multiple Initiatives in Rwanda

Kigali, Rwanda -- President Bush, on the third country stop of his five-nation Africa tour February 19, announced a \$100 million peacekeeper training initiative for Darfur, signed a bilateral investment treaty with Rwanda and told Rwandans that the Peace Corps will be returning to their country for the first time since 1993.

Bush made the announcements at a joint press availability with Rwandan President Paul Kagame following extensive talks with Kagame and his Cabinet. Discussions included issues pertinent to Rwanda and to the region, such as bringing about peace in the Darfur region of Sudan and in the Eastern Congo.



*President George W. Bush and Rwanda President Paul Kagame sign a Bilateral Investment Treaty Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2008, at the Presidency in Kigali, Rwanda. White House photo by Chris Greenberg*

Providing details on the peacekeeping training initiative, Bush said, "We are cooperating to address violence and genocide in Darfur." Bush said he was "not surprised that the first nation to step up and say we want to deploy peacekeepers" to Darfur was Rwanda. Bush thanked the Rwandan president, saying "it is a strong statement on your part," and he credited Rwanda for being one of the largest contributors to peace and stability in Darfur.

The United States, Bush said, has helped to train more than 7,000 Rwandan peacekeepers and provided more than \$17 million to equip and transport these forces to Darfur.

Both he and Kagame, Bush said, agree that "the role of the United States is to help Africans deal with African problems." One such problem is the genocide in Darfur.

Bush said that of the \$100 million

to fund the United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNIMID) peacekeepers, about \$12 million will go to Rwanda to train additional peacekeepers and purchase needed vehicles for them. Funds also will be distributed to Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, Burkina Faso and Malawi, he said.

Bush called on other nations to join and "help get this problem solved" and pledged the United States will help. "We will help through sanctions. We will help through pressure and we will help provide money to get these forces in -- in an effective manner," he said.

Bush said that, in addition to discussions about conflict areas, his talks with Kagame also involved economic issues, including the bilateral investment treaty he and Kagame signed.

That agreement, Bush said, "sends a signal to U.S. companies that they ought to consider investing in Rwanda" because private invest-

ment is far more effective in fueling long-term economic growth and development than government grants. The treaty will provide legal safeguards to U.S. corporations investing in Rwanda, he said, promoting transparency and legal protections for all.

### **MALARIA, HIV/AIDS INITIATIVES TOUTED**

Besides hailing the return of the Peace Corps, which he called "good, decent folks coming into your country to help," he cited the success of his President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) in Rwanda, which has set a goal of spraying more than 350,000 homes and providing more than 900,000 treatments of lifesaving medicine.

On HIV/AIDS, Bush said his President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has helped deliver anti-retroviral drugs to 44,000 Rwandans and 650,000 pregnant

*(Continued on page 9)*

## Bush Announces Multiple Initiatives in Rwanda . . .

(Continued from page 8)

women in Africa to help prevent viral transmission from mother to child. "This is a good beginning," he said, and then asked the U.S. Congress to double funding for PEPFAR from \$15 billion over five years to \$30 billion.

In his comments, Kagame praised Bush for his dedication to Africa. He said the signing of the bilateral investment treaty is a direct reflection of the values that the United States and Rwanda share: investment in people; the promotion of democracy; and an accessible, transparent government serving the people.

Kagame said Rwanda is now a vastly different nation than it was at the time of the 1994 genocide, which claimed the lives of more than 800,000 people. Rwandan school enrollment is up to 96 percent, while immunization levels of the populace have risen to 95 percent, thanks to help from the United States, he said.

Also thanks to the PMI and PEPFAR programs, Kagame said, thousands of mothers and children are alive now who otherwise would have been victims of malaria or HIV/AIDS.

Asked by the press about the Rwandan genocide, Bush said, "We support U.N. Security Council resolutions targeting those who perpetuated the violence and have



*President Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush react during a discussion with members of the Lycee de Kigali 'Anti-AIDS Club' Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2008, outside of the Lycee de Kigali in Kigali, Rwanda. White House photo by Eric Draper*

made our positions publicly known."

Bush said his visit earlier to the Kigali Memorial Centre, which memorializes victims of the genocide, had a "profound effect" on him. "You can't help but walk in there and realize that evil does exist and, in this case, in such brutal form that

babies had their skulls smashed."

What the world needs to ask, he said, is what can be done to prevent such things from happening again. "When we see issues," he said, "people need to pay attention to the warning signs and prevent crises from happening."

When help is sent to correct such a situation, assistance must be deployed with the proper mandate to "help deal with the situation." That is what is needed in Darfur, Bush said. "We are pleased with the mandate in Darfur, now we just have to get people in place to save lives," he said.

After Rwanda, Bush will visit Ghana and Liberia before returning to Washington. His trip began in Benin and he arrived in

Rwanda from Tanzania.

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

## Tanzania Gives Warm Welcome to President Bush, First Lady

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania -- Air Force One, President Bush's official aircraft, touched down in Tanzania February 16 on the second leg of Bush's historic five-nation Africa trip. The president made a brief stop in Benin prior to his arrival in Dar es Salaam and will visit Rwanda, Ghana and Liberia afterward.

President Bush and first lady Laura Bush stepped on a red carpet, where they were greeted by Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete and the first lady of Tanzania, who was dressed in a locally produced beige cloth (kanga) adorned with President Bush's picture, Tanzanian and U.S. flags and welcome slogans in Swahili.

Beside the first lady of Tanzania, many other women on the tarmac wore the same kanga dresses adorned with slogans such as "Udumu Urafikiki Kati Ya Marekani Tanzania," which roughly translates as "Long Live Tanzanian and American friendship." The kanga-clothed ladies danced in unison while waving small U.S. and Tanzanian flags as the crowds cheered wildly.

Three additional dance groups also performed, providing background music. All three groups were clad in traditional cultural dress.

The presidential honor guard, festooned in red military tunics, green hats and blue pants stood at attention and lined the red carpet, which was bordered with yellow, black

and green stripes -- the national colors of Tanzania. After reviewing the honor guard and white tunic-clad military band, both leaders stood at attention as the national

sported several illuminated billboards proclaiming U.S.-Tanzanian solidarity. "Unity -- Tanzania and the United States," one read, showing the pictures of both leaders and



*.S. President George W. Bush is greeted by Maasai dancers as he arrives in Arusha, Tanzania, Monday, Feb. 18, 2008. (AP Photo/Charles Dharapak)*

anthems were played of both countries.

The flags of both nations were unfurled as an artillery gun salute was fired from military cannons in the distance. Air Force One sat in the background on the tarmac as the African sun began to set and the two leaders worked the rope line of dignitaries who had assembled for the ceremony.

Thousands of people turned out to line the motorcade route, which had been cleared of traffic. The main airport road, named for Julius Nyerere, the nation's first president,

flags of both nations.

Another billboard at a main intersection said "We cherish democracy" and featured a picture of President Bush with Mount Kilimanjaro in the background. A third placard said "Thank you for the Millennium Challenge Corporation" while a fourth read "Thank you in your support in the fight against HIV/AIDS."

One woman spectator on the airport tarmac -- clad in the beige Kanga cloth -- told America.gov she was very proud of her country and proud that President Bush and first lady

*(Continued on page 12)*

## Bush Signs Nearly \$700 Million MCC Compact with Tanzania

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania -- The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact with Tanzania will provide nearly \$700 million in five years to improve the country's transportation network, secure reliable supplies of energy and expand access to clean and safe water, President Bush says. The Compact with Tanzania is the largest such economic agreement awarded to date.

"My hope is that such an initiative will be part of an effort to transform parts of this country," Bush said February 17 in an outdoor ceremony at Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete's official residence. "We join you in this because of your government and your personal commitment to fight corruption, to invest in the education and health of your people and to accept and expand marketplace economics."

Both Bush and Kikwete engaged in talks for more than one hour before emerging to sign the MCC Compact and speak with reporters at a joint press availability.

Bush praised Kikwete's government, saying, "We are partners in democracy and believe that governments should respond to the people and are partners to fighting disease, extending opportunity and working for peace."

In his remarks, Kikwete gave thanks for the MCC initiative, saying the funding will address critical infrastructure challenges that "for a long time have been an obstacle to growth and development."

Signing the agreement personally in



*President George W. Bush reaches out to some of the hundreds of well-wishers in the ceremonial arrival cordon on hand to welcome him Sunday, Feb. 17, 2008, to the State House in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. White House photo by Eric Draper*

Tanzania, Kikwete said, shows that Bush deeply loves Tanzania in his heart.

The Tanzanian leader went on to praise Bush for his "great compassion" towards Africa by reaching out using different initiatives, instruments and moral leadership to support Africa's efforts to improve governance, to fight poverty, to seek shared prosperity, to resolve conflict, to improve security and jointly, to fight the scourge of terrorism.

### FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS

The United States and Tanzania also are working together to fight HIV/AIDS through the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR) and combat malaria as part of the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), Bush said.

Under Bush's administration, the number of people receiving anti-retrovirals to fight HIV/AIDS in Africa has grown from 50,000 to more than 1.2 million people, the U.S. president said.

"I tell people in America that [number] is great and good ... but it is only a start," Bush said. For that reason, he continued, Bush is asking the U.S. Congress to double the amount of HIV/AIDS money for Africa under his PEPFAR plan.

Bush also called on Congress to reauthorize PEPFAR for another five years. "We don't want people guessing on the continent of Africa whether or not the generosity of the American people will continue," he said.

### EFFORTS TO COMBAT MALARIA

*(Continued on page 12)*

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## Bush Signs Nearly \$700 Million MCC Compact with Tanzania . . .

*(Continued from page 11)*

Moving on to malaria, Bush said, "It breaks my heart to know that little children are dying needlessly because of a mosquito bite" and from a virus that is readily treatable through money and organization.

He went on to praise Kikwete for his dedication to distributing insecticide-treated bed nets, educating the public and in making great strides against malaria in Zanzibar, an island off the Tanzanian coast which Bush said, "stands as an example to all on the continent."

Kikwete thanked Bush and the American people for saving lives in Africa. "Mr. President, today there are thousands of women and children who would have died of malaria but who are still alive in Tanzania and all over the continent" because of the President's Malaria Initiative, he said.

Kikwete cited health statistics from

Zanzibar, Tanzania, to illustrate his point. "In 2004, in the outpatient clinic, 500,000 malaria patients were treated. In 2007, only 10,000 [were treated]. In 2004 on Zanzibar, 40 percent of the patients tested positive for malaria. In 2007, only 5 percent" tested positive, he explained.

Additionally, he said, thousands of children are now being cared for by their parents rather than becoming orphans because of President Bush's PEPFAR program.

"Different people may have different views about you and your administration and your legacy, but we in Tanzania -- if we are to speak for ourselves and for Africa -- know for sure that you Mr. President have been good friends of our country ... and Africa," Kikwete said.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES IN TANZANIA

Following the State House ceremony, President Bush and first lady Laura Bush toured the Amana Dis-

trict Hospital, which the United States helped build to serve more than one million people with 13 dispensaries. Afterward, the two participated in a roundtable with HIV/AIDS patients to hear testimonials from those being treated under PEPFAR.

The president and first lady ended the day by meeting with the families of victims of the 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassy here before returning to State House to attend a dinner in their honor.

Bush will spend one more full day in Tanzania before traveling on to Rwanda, Ghana and Liberia before returning home. He arrived in Tanzania from Benin, the first stop on his historic second trip to Africa.

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

## Tanzania Gives Warm Welcome to President Bush, First Lady . . .

*(Continued from page 10)*

Laura Bush were visiting Tanzania. Another spectator said, "We are proud of President Bush, that he is coming to Tanzania and hope that this visit will foster an even closer relationship between the U.S. and Tanzania."

A banner at the airport hovered over the ceremony proclaiming "Karibu" the Swahili word for welcome to Dar es Salaam, "the Haven of Peace."

While in Tanzania, Bush is expected to hold talks with President Kikwete and sign a Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact Agreement for economic growth and development.

Additionally, the president and first lady Laura Bush are expected to tour the Amana District Hospital located in the Dar es Salaam city center. Amana serves a population of about 1 million people. Both

also will participate in a roundtable with patients and be hosted at a dinner to be held in their honor at State House, the seat of government.

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

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## First Ladies Launch Orphan Care Plan for Tanzania

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania -- The first ladies of the United States and Tanzania are launching Tanzania's National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children to go into neighborhoods throughout Tanzania to identify and provide services to children who have been orphaned or are vulnerable as a result of HIV/AIDS.

President Bush's U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, Mark Dybul, called the program a "very innovative and forward leaning plan" that is going to go into neighborhoods, have community groups identify orphans and vulnerable children and the services they need, as well as provide those services.



*Mrs. Laura Bush joins a discussion with orphans and caretakers at the WAMA Foundation Sunday, Feb. 17, 2008 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, during a meeting to launch the National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children. White House photo by Shealah Craighead*

The American people "through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), along with the government of Tanzania and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria" are supporting this effort, he said. Dybul told reporters February 17 that Tanzania currently has around 2.5 million orphans and about half of them became orphaned when their parents died of HIV/AIDS.

According to Dybul, the national orphan care plan will be led by the government in each community but will involve a wide array of community-based groups that will be responsible for ensuring that needy orphans get the care they need. This year alone, Dybul said, the American people are going to reach 83 of the 138 districts in Tanzania

to roll out this plan. Currently, he said, the United States supports orphan care for about 220,000 of the 1.25 million HIV/AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

"We will be able to expand that dramatically through this plan," he predicted. The real heart of the program, he said, is the intent of the PEPFAR plan -- to "get out into the community where services will make a difference." Additionally, he said, multiple government ministries -- not just the Ministry of Health -- will be involved in this program to give it added effectiveness and momentum.

Dybul said the United States hopes to follow up and spread the program as broadly as possible to other countries.

In addition to launching the orphan care plan, U.S. first lady Laura Bush and Tanzania's first lady Salma Kikwete also visited a madrasa, where lessons on prevention and the impact of HIV/AIDS are taught by faith-based leaders. It is there where young people are being taught to respect themselves, respect others, delay sexual activity and be monogamous, Dybul said. According to Dybul, leaders of other faiths also were present during the first ladies' visit to demonstrate this is an interfaith effort.

Dybul quoted first lady Laura Bush, saying, "We can't win the fight against HIV/AIDS if we don't involve faith-based organizations. They are the ones in the communi-

*(Continued on page 14)*

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## First Ladies Launch Orphan Care Plan for Tanzania . . .

*(Continued from page 13)*

ties. They are the ones with reach and credibility in their own communities."

Such an approach is especially important in Africa, he said, because the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 30-70 percent of health care in sub-Saharan Africa is in the faith sector. For that reason, he said, "you can't possibly tackle HIV/AIDS either in the health area or in the behavior change area if you are not dealing with faith-based organizations."

Lastly, he said, both presidents and first ladies visited the Amana District Hospital and a clinic there that had been built through funds made available by PEPFAR. There, he said, the group attended a roundtable with a number of HIV/AIDS positive patients and heard firsthand how their lives had been dramatically changed through the clinic and anti-retroviral drugs and treatment they received there.

At the roundtable, President Kikwete identified one such person, retired military officer and farmer Honorati Valeri Shirima, who was almost near death in 2005 when he came to the hospital. "I'm told when he came here, he was in very

bad shape. He was in bad, bad shape. He was almost dying. So he started the program of anti-retrovirals (ARVs), and you can see how he looks now. He looks healthy, he looks much better than what he was.

"So all that I can say ... is words of appreciation and thanksgiving. It has done a tremendous job," Kikwete told the group.

The party heard another story about an HIV/AIDS couple who found out together they were HIV-positive, got married and went on to have a child who is HIV-negative thanks to treatment and education from the clinic.

The group also from Tatu Msangi, a registered nurse at the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center (KCMC). Msangi discovered she was HIV-positive when she found out she was pregnant. She enrolled in a Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) program and delivered a healthy daughter named Faith. Msangi, who was recently a guest at Bush's State of the Union Address before a joint session of Congress, now counsels HIV-positive women and encourages them to participate in the PMTCT program. All three site visits, Dybul says, represent Bush's approach to

a new era in development in partnering with and supporting local people.

"We saw that today, the governments together, jointly supporting activities -- working in the community to support community organizations," he said.

Transcripts of Dybul's press briefing ( <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/>

February/20080217141303bpuh7.435244e-02.html ), U.S. first lady Laura Bush's remarks ( <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/>

February/20080217160624bpuh0.3149988.html ) at the launch of Tanzania's orphan care plan and remarks by Presidents Bush and Kikwete ( <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/>

February/20080217165318bpuh0.3098871.html ) at a roundtable with HIV/AIDS patients are available on [America.gov](http://www.america.gov).

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

## Bush Cites Positive Changes in Africa . . .

*(Continued from page 7)*

will visit (Benin, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ghana and Liberia) "are leaders who have committed themselves to the good of their people, have committed themselves to honest government, and have committed themselves to investing in people. They are more interested in leaving behind a legacy of education than leaving behind a self-serving government."

"There's no better way of making that point than coming to the continent, and that's why I'm here. ... It's been a great trip."

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

## Tanzanian Children To Receive Free Bed Nets, Bush Says

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania -- Calling the suffering caused by malaria "needless," and "every death caused by malaria ... unacceptable," President Bush says an initiative to distribute 5.2 million free bed nets in Tanzania will be enough to protect every child in the country between the ages of 1 and 5.

At least one million infants and children under the age of 5 die each year from malaria in sub-Saharan Africa, or about one every 30 seconds -- a number greater than the entire population of San Francisco or twice the population of Washington.

After announcing the initiative February 18, Bush was the first to hand out some of the free, specially treated bed nets to needy Tanzanians.

The program, which is sponsored by the United States and Tanzania in partnership with the World Bank and Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, is urgently needed because "it is unacceptable to people here in Africa who see their families devastated and economies crippled," Bush said.

The situation also is unacceptable "to people in the United States, who believe that every human life has value," especially "when the power to save lives comes with the moral obligation to use it," he continued.

Bush called the bed nets the simplest way to prevent malaria. He noted that the bed net program not only will save lives by protecting people while they sleep from malaria-carrying mosquitoes, but will help support the local economy because the bed nets will be produced

at a local plant.

### VISIT TO MERU DISTRICT HOSPITAL

Bush made his announcement at the Meru District Hospital in the northern Tanzanian city of Arusha, which lies in the shadow of Mount

side-treated bed nets and visited a pediatric ward to see firsthand children being diagnosed and treated for malaria.

"For years malaria has been a health crisis in sub-Saharan Africa," Bush told his audience. "The disease keeps sick workers home,



*President George W. Bush greets a young child on his arrival Monday, Feb. 18, 2008, for a tour of the outpatient clinic of the Meru District Hospital in Arusha, Tanzania. White House photo by Eric Draper*

Kilimanjaro and is a President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) partner facility. He and first lady Laura Bush traveled there on their last full day in Tanzania to see firsthand how the initiative is saving lives.

The Meru District Hospital -- a 120-bed facility -- functions as a major malaria treatment center handling some 1300 cases monthly.

Bush praised the facility for being on the "forefront" of the fight against malaria. While touring the facility, he and the first lady hugged staff and children, met pregnant women who are receiving insecti-

schoolyards quiet and communities in mourning." That, he reiterated, is "unacceptable."

### POSITIVE RESULTS FROM PRESIDENT'S MALARIA INITIATIVE

Through the President's Malaria Initiative, positive results already are apparent in Tanzania, Bush said. "In June 2006, at the District Hospital in Muleba, more than 50 people died of malaria. In June 2007, after a spraying campaign sponsored by our [President's] Malaria Initiative, the number of deaths had dropped to five," he said.

*(Continued on page 17)*

## Benin Visit Symbolizes U.S. Commitment to Africa

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania -- President Bush's arrival in Cotonou, Benin -- the first stop on his historic five-nation Africa tour -- symbolizes the U.S. commitment to improving peoples' lives all across the continent. Bush is the first U.S. president ever to visit Benin.

Speaking with President Thomas Yayi Boni at Cadjehoun International Airport, Bush said he chose to visit Benin, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ghana and Liberia because it is "in our national interest to support the people of nations -- even though we may not [have] had relations with them in the past -- particularly those nations in which the leadership and the government makes a firm commitment to the investment in its people, fighting corruption, marketplace economies."

"My trip here is to remind future presidents and future Congresses that it is in our national interests and in the moral interests of the United States of America to help people," he said.

In his comments, President Yayi praised Bush for visiting Benin and said it comes as a follow-up to talks both leaders had at the White House on December 14, 2006. Yayi said both he and Bush had "very fruitful exchanges" during their brief meetings in Cotonou.

Both nations, Yayi said, are united in "excellent relations."

"As you know," Yayi noted, "during his two terms in office, President Bush showed great concern for Africa, its well-being and the development of his people." He praised Bush in particular for the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), the Africa Education Initiative, the



*President George W. Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush pose with women at Cadjehoun International Airport in Cotonou, Benin Saturday, Feb. 16, 2008, after they greeted the President and First Lady upon arrival. White House photo by Shealah Craighead*

President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and for initiatives that help in the empowerment of women.

Yayi said his country also is benefiting from the Millennium Challenge Account initiative and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Both leaders also talked about issues of cooperation and conflict situations in Africa, Benin's participation in peacekeeping operations and reform of the United Nations system.

Bush praised Yayi for believing "that all human beings deserve dignity that people need a government that responds to their desires and wishes." Bush said he had "come bringing the warm friendship of the people of the United States" and

reaffirming "our desire to help strengthen your democracy by helping the people here realize their God-given talents."

Bush also praised his Beninese counterpart for his dedication to ensuring that every child has an anti-malarial, insecticide-treated bed net. "We can save lives with an aggressive, comprehensive strategy," he said, in reference to the PMI and Yayi's dedication on the issue. The use of specially treated bed nets has been shown to reduce sickness and death caused by malaria.

Additionally, Bush praised Yayi for his equal dedication to education. "You know what I know -- that a nation can't be a hopeful place unless its youth are educated, so I am very pleased to be working with

*(Continued on page 17)*

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## Benin Visit Symbolizes U.S. Commitment to Africa . . .

*(Continued from page 16)*

you to expand educational opportunities for the people of your country," he said. Through the Africa Education Initiative, Bush said, the United States has helped train about 30,000 teachers in Benin and provide 1 million textbooks that have helped young girls get a good education.

"We are going to spend about another \$6 million on these efforts only because you are focused and your government is dedicated to making sure the money is spent well and wisely," he said.

On the Millennium Challenge Ac-

count, Bush said the United States has been "more than pleased" to provide \$307 million over five years to help the country develop, which has touched the lives of about five million people and help thousands more get out of poverty.

He also praised the Yayi government in its fight against corruption. "One of the reasons I have come here, sir, is because leaders around the world have got to understand that the United States wants to partner with leaders and the people, but we are not going to do so with people who steal money."

Bush said this state trip was designed to herald success in Africa

that would help others realize what is possible. He acknowledged the crisis in Kenya and the Darfur region of Sudan.

"Sudan is a very difficult situation which we have labeled a genocide," he said.

On Kenya, Bush said the situation is significant and he is sending Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to the country February 18. There Rice will assist with former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan's initiative and deliver a message to end the violence and create a power-sharing agreement. ♦

## Tanzanian Children To Receive Free Bed Nets, Bush Says . . .

*(Continued from page 15)*

Bush added that in Zanzibar "the percentage of infants infected with malaria has dropped from about 20 percent to less than 1 percent" in the wake of the initiative.

"The campaign to fight malaria has the support of government and citizens alike," not only across Africa but worldwide as well. American schoolchildren have raised money to pay for bed nets in Africa, and many faith-based organizations have sent their people to Africa to fight the mosquito-borne illness, according to Bush.

Bush launched the PMI in June 2005, pledging to increase malaria funding by more than \$1.2 billion over five years to reduce deaths by

malaria by 50 percent in 15 African countries.

PMI uses a comprehensive approach to prevent and treat malaria, supporting four key areas: indoor spraying of homes with insecticides; insecticide-treated bed nets; lifesaving anti-malarial drugs and treatment to prevent malaria in pregnant women.

### VISIT TO BED NET FACTORY

Besides visiting the Meru District Hospital, the president and first lady also toured the A to Z Textile Mills, a complex in Arusha that produces the insecticide-treated bed nets. The factory has a control room with laboratory equipment to inspect fabric strength and ensure that the nets contain the required amount of

insecticide.

To date, more than 3 million bed net vouchers already have been distributed in Tanzania under a separate program, with roughly 1.9 million from PMI. The vouchers under that program allow people to purchase their bed nets at a 75 percent discount from local retailers.

Before boarding Air Force One for the return trip to Dar es Salaam, the president and first lady also stopped off at the Maasai Girls School for a visit.

Bush leaves Tanzania February 18 for onward travel to Rwanda, Ghana and Liberia before returning home later this week. His February 15-21 Africa trip started in Benin. ♦

## Texas Enjoys Unexpected Attention in Presidential Primary Battle

San Antonio -- Voters in southwest Texas's 23rd Congressional District are enjoying national attention as the "Lone Star State" suddenly has become relevant to this year's presidential candidates.

In most presidential election years, the major parties' nominees are decided in other states, before Texans have the opportunity to vote.

This year will be the first time since 1968 that the Texas primary, on March 4, plays a role in determining the Democratic Party's presidential nominee.

Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama are going all-out to win Texas, with personal appearances, big advertising campaigns and endorsements from prominent figures and groups.

On the Republican side, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee has vowed to fight front-running contender Senator John McCain at least through the Texas primary.

The excitement over the presidential races could bring out record numbers of voters. That could have an effect on the Democratic primary for U.S. senator, and the Texas 23rd's Republican primary to pick a challenger to run against Democratic Representative Ciro Rodriguez.

The leading Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate nomination is Rick Noriega, a state representative from Houston. His opponents include Ray McMurrey, a Corpus Christi schoolteacher.

Also running is Gene Kelly, an 81-

year-old retired military lawyer who eight years ago won the Democratic U.S. Senate nomination, despite not campaigning. Analysts believe voters confused him with the deceased dancer and movie star of the same name. San Antonio security guard Rhett Smith completes the field.



*Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois has 10 consecutive primary/caucus wins*

Noriega is favored by the Texas Democratic establishment to run in November against incumbent Republican Senator John Cornyn.

Noriega is a lieutenant colonel in the Texas Army National Guard and has served in Afghanistan. He criticizes Cornyn's support of President Bush's Iraq war policy. Cornyn, who has only token opposition in the Republican primary, has declined to respond to Noriega. He says he will wait until the Democrats have chosen his opponent.

The national Democratic Party will be watching Noriega to see if he can win the primary without a run-off. Democratic pollsters say Cornyn, a first-term senator, is vul-

nerable. However, Cornyn has one huge advantage: he started his re-election campaign with \$7.5 million in cash, compared with Noriega's \$968,000.

The Texas 23rd's Republican congressional primary pits a wealthy lawyer and banker, Francisco "Quico" Canseco, against Lyle Larson, a former San Antonio city councilman and current Bexar County commissioner.

Canseco faces an uphill challenge, despite a larger, self-financed campaign fund. He only moved to San Antonio a few years ago from



*Sen. Hillary Clinton has set her sights on the upcoming contests in Texas and Ohio.*

Laredo, where he lost a 2004 race for Congress. Meanwhile, Larson has represented the Republican stronghold of northwestern Bexar County since 1996. Larson says his constituents will make up about 60 percent of the 23rd's Republican primary vote. The 23rd's former congressman, Republican Henry Bonilla, has endorsed Larson. "Lyle has a long history with the Republican Party," Bonilla told the political newspaper Roll Call. "He has an incredibly strong reputation." Bonilla

*(Continued on page 25)*

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## Turnout Mounts in U.S. Presidential Primaries

Washington -- Conventional wisdom holds that presidential primaries and caucuses attract voters with high political motivation. Frequently, they are party activists or agenda-driven voters who stand on the left or right of the political spectrum. Not so in 2008.

Voting turnout records are being broken in most states. States report that more people have registered to vote. Precincts have run out of ballots because of the unexpected rush. And the voters represent a broader constituency than usual.

Caucus sites in Hawaii were overflowing, with lines snaking into the street on February 19. An estimated 10 times the 4,000 voters who caucused in 2004 cast ballots. Veteran U.S. senator from Hawaii Daniel Inouye told the Associated Press it was the largest turnout he had seen in 60 years of voting. "The fact that turnout was so extraordinary shows that democracy works," he said. He waited in line nearly two hours to vote.

The same day, Wisconsin saw a similarly high turnout. Exit polls indicated about 15 percent were first-time voters. Precincts predicted final turnout figures between 35 and 50 percent.

Experts say the reasons for this enthusiasm are deep disapproval of current administration policies and the excitement generated by the two candidates in close contention for the Democratic nomination. Either candidate will make history: Hillary Clinton would be the first woman and Barack Obama would be the first African American to win the nomination of a major political party.

"The most open presidential race since at least 1952 has captured the public's imagination. This is leading to large turnouts almost everywhere. Dissatisfaction with President Bush and the Iraq war have resulted in Democratic turnouts skyrocketing, setting new records in state after state," University of Virginia election expert Larry J. Sabato told America.gov.

"By contrast," he said, "GOP [Republican] voters are unhappy and their turnout is depressed, below earlier levels in many states."

A recent report issued by American University's Center for the Study of the American Electorate found that half the 24 states that held primaries on Super Tuesday, February 5, saw record voter turnouts.

Americans who vote regularly often take it as a sacred trust. As one woman told America.gov at a Maryland polling place February 12: "It's very important for us to vote. We've voted in every election." A man of Irish-Mexican descent said, "I always vote because it's my duty," recalling how his Irish mother insisted on the importance of voting.

But when faced with an uninspiring selection, voters stay away from the polls out of frustration, apathy or the belief that their vote will not make a difference.

That isn't the case for Democrats in 2008. "I feel like this primary matters, that it's still relevant. The decision isn't already made," Obama supporter Corrine Farrell told America.gov at a voting precinct in the nation's capital February 12.

According to a February 8-10 USA Today/Gallup Poll, 79 percent of Democrats say they are "more enthusiastic than usual about voting in this election," as compared with 44 percent of Republicans, who don't see McCain as much different from previous candidates. A majority -- in excess of 60 percent -- of Democrats polled see Clinton and Obama as better than most presidential candidates contesting in their lifetimes.

The large turnout may also be traced to the multiplicity of issues important to voters. Another recent USA Today/Gallup Poll found "Americans think everything is important." Of the 14 issues respondents were asked about, all were ranked as either extremely or very important. Overall, the economy was at the top, followed by the war in Iraq. Other issues of concern include education, government corruption, health care, energy, the environment and immigration. Rankings differed slightly when broken down by party.

The implications of the increased enthusiasm and voter turnout for the November election remain a big question. Much will depend on who becomes the Democratic Party nominee.

Sabato cautions: "It's a long time to November, and so we shouldn't read too much into the primary results in January and February. At the same time, it's a good early sign for the Democratic Party. The Democratic nominee will have to work hard to sustain all the interest, but it's not a bad starting position."

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## Exchange Students Get Close-up View of American Primary Politics

Washington -- As citizens in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia (Washington) headed to the polls February 12, the rain and bitter cold did not keep campaign volunteers from making final efforts to sway "Potomac Primary" voters.

Among those knocking on doors and waving campaign signs was a group of high school students from Georgia, Russia and Ukraine. These students, participants in the State Department's Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program, are spending the school year in the United States and came to the Washington area to witness American democracy in action.

The exchange students joined American volunteers of all ages and backgrounds and waved signs on street corners and knocked on doors trying to sway voters who remained undecided until the last minute.

"Everyone was really excited ... it is really amazing that different people of all ages were there," Olha Krasnokutska, 16, from Ukraine, said of her fellow volunteers. "It is really cool that everyone is interested in politics."

Spending the day on the campaign trail gave the students an opportunity to learn more about the candidates. The experience helped them develop opinions on who would be best to lead the United States.

"I would have voted for [John Edwards], said 16-year-old Nikolay Rogov of Russia. "[Barack] Obama, [Hillary] Clinton and Edwards' views were really close ... but for me it's personality ... it's one of the most important things." "I think Hillary [Clinton] is strong and I think she is a really good politician," said Tamari

Kobiashvili, 17, from Georgia. "She has skills and she is a leader."

But like a large percentage of American youth, the students overwhelmingly favored Obama. They were attracted to the Illinois senator's personality and messages about ending the war in Iraq.

"He is for peace," said 16-year-old Natasha Potorochina from Russia. "I'm a very peaceful person."



*FLEX students show their support for Democrat Barack Obama. (State Dept.)*

"I like his ideas, and many people right now are disappointed that the war is going on," said Keira Medvedeva, a 16-year-old from Russia.

Aleksandra Kaspruk, 15, from Ukraine, favored Obama after spending time with his enthusiastic campaign volunteers. "A president should be a person people believe in," she said. "Seeing all these people so excited ... and screaming for Obama ... makes you think that 'Oh, he's a really nice guy -- maybe he should be president.'"

Some of the students also visited Virginia Board of Elections offices, where they observed how problems at the polls are handled. They watched as volunteers answered phone calls and worked to resolve problems, no matter how big or small.

For example, volunteers at one polling site were so cold that officials had blankets distributed to them. In another incident, voters complained that legal parking was unavailable at a polling site, so officials asked a police officer to allow voters to use a nearby parking lot without getting ticketed.

Many of the students also toured polling sites and saw firsthand that U.S. voting is conducted in a fair manner.

"It is very democratic; you know for sure no one knows who you vote for," said Max Krykunets, 16, from Ukraine.

At the polls, some of the students tested election tools not used in their home countries -- electronic voting machines. "Americans have cool voting machines," Krykunets said. "They have machines for blind people, for disabled people."

Yet the students also saw firsthand that many Americans still have concerns about using electronic voting machines, as dozens of voters requested they be allowed to cast their votes on paper ballots.

Although they will return to their home countries before a new U.S. president is picked, the students will be watching closely the outcome of the race. As one student explained, the impact of the U.S. presidential race will be felt globally.

"There is an election going on now in Russia and in the United States," said 16-year-old Russian student Angelina Onipchenko. "The world will change because of the change of leaders in the two countries." ♦

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## Kenya Crisis Needs To End Soon, Rice Says

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania -- The situation in Kenya is a "crisis and a crisis that needs to end soon," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says following daylong talks there with Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki, political opposition leader Raila Odinga and other concerned parties. Violence following the deeply flawed December 27, 2007, presidential election has resulted in hundreds dead and thousands displaced from their homes.

Answering questions from reporters in Nairobi, Kenya, February 18, Rice outlined four items to which former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the feuding political parties have agreed in a framework.

First and foremost, there must be a total renunciation of violence and a refusal to return to violence, the secretary said, calling that step "the most important plank of any platform to move forward."

Second, there needs to be agreement that the parties are going to allow an "electoral truth" to be found, which she said "means that a commission that can look into what happened in the Kenyan election." December 27, 2007, "clearly was not a good day for Kenyan democracy," she said.

"Kenyans obviously tried to exercise their democratic rights and we congratulate them on having done so," but "there does need to be an understanding and an accounting on

what happened in the elections," she said.

Third, Rice said there needs to be a "way to govern Kenya now," and that "is going to require political compromise on the part of the major parties so Kenya can move forward."



*US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (L) speaks to the press alongside former UN Chief and Kenya crisis mediator Kofi Annan at a local hotel in Nairobi on February 18, 2008. AFP PHOTO/Walter ASTRADA CORRECTING YEAR(AFP/Walter Astrada)*

Finally, she stressed, "there needs to be -- as there was supposed to have been over the last several years -- constitutional reform, electoral reform, and a number of other reforms that really need to be made so that this country has a firm foundation for democracy moving forward."

"Sometimes in democracies, there are crises," she said, but the key "is to use any crisis as an opportunity to put the country on a firmer footing."

Rice said she has spoken with civil society representatives, the business community and the press,

which she said has been supportive of a return to democracy.

President Bush dispatched Rice to Kenya from Tanzania as they were both traveling through Africa on his five-nation trip.

Asked what the United States could do to help bring about a power-sharing arrangement in Kenya, Rice said, "I frankly believe that the time for political settlement is yesterday. It is really important that this be done and done urgently."

She quickly acknowledged, though, that "not everything can be done very quickly; obviously some of the reforms are going to take some time. That is good," she said, "but Kenyans, I sense, need to believe

that this country is moving forward and not locked in a political stalemate."

Rice said the United States is prepared to support civil society to "make certain there is accountability as constitutional and other reforms go farther. There is no greater accountability for democratically elected leaders" she offered, "than to have a civil society that is strong and mature and able to keep check on what is going on, and so we have been supportive of civil society and are prepared to do more."

The United States remains "very concerned about displaced people

## United States Leading Global Response To Crisis in Darfur, Sudan

The United States is committed to ending the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan and continues to lead the world in responding to the crisis there by providing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations, enabling the deployment of an international peacekeeping force and promoting a lasting political settlement, a White House fact sheet says.

Following is the text of the fact sheet:

(begin fact sheet)

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary  
(Kigali, Rwanda)  
February 19, 2008

Fact Sheet

United States Leading The  
Global Response To Crisis In  
Darfur  
President Bush Remains Com-  
mitted To Ending The Violence

The United States is committed to ending the genocide in Darfur and continues to lead the world in responding to the crisis there by providing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations, enabling the deployment of an international peacekeeping force, and promoting a lasting political settlement. To spearhead these efforts, President Bush named Richard S. Williamson as Special Envoy to Sudan on Dec. 21, 2007.

The United States is pushing for full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which was signed in January 2005 and ended 21 years of civil war between the North and South. The



*The United States is committed to ending the genocide in the Darfur region*

CPA, which created the Government of National Unity, calls for democratic national elections before July 2009 and the deployment of troops away from the border. Implementation of the CPA will help end the crisis in Darfur and provide a framework for the development of a peaceful, unified, and democratic Sudan.

The United States has imposed economic sanctions on seven Sudanese individuals responsible for violence in Darfur and on more than 160 companies owned or controlled by the Government of Sudan. The United States took these steps to increase pressure on Khartoum to end the violence in Darfur. Furthermore, the United States has en-

forced the application of existing sanctions to deny Sudanese banks access to the U.S. financial system and use of the U.S. Dollar.

### U.S. Assistance

The United States is the largest single donor to Sudan, including to Darfur where more than 2.5 million people live in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Since the outbreak of violence in Darfur, the United States provided, through FY 2007, nearly \$2.5 billion in humanitarian and peacekeeping assistance to that region. In FY 2007, the U.S. gave more than \$1 billion in assistance to the people of Sudan, including Darfur, and anticipates providing a similar amount in FY 2008. In 2007, the United States provided more than 67 percent of the World Food Program's food aid to Sudan, serving more than 6 million people throughout Sudan and eastern Chad.

### Peacekeeping

The United States supports the rapid deployment of 26,000 United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) peacekeepers. Since 2004, the United States has spent more than \$15 million to airlift 11,400 peacekeepers and their equipment to and from Darfur, and has provided over \$30 million to train and equip those forces. Since 2004, total direct and indirect U.S. support provided to peacekeeping operations in Darfur totals more than \$600 million. The United States will pay more than one-fourth of the total cost of UNAMID through United Nations assessed

*(Continued on page 25)*

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## United States Recognizes Kosovo as Independent State

Washington -- The United States welcomes the commitments Kosovo made in its declaration of independence to accept a special U.N. implementation plan and to embrace multi-ethnicity as part of good governance. The Kosovo parliament declared the nation's independence February 17 in Pristina.

"The United States has today formally recognized Kosovo as a sovereign and independent state," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said February 18 in a statement released in Washington. "We congratulate the people of Kosovo on this historic occasion."

Rice is traveling with President Bush on a five-nation state visit to Africa.

Bush has agreed to establish formal diplomatic relations between the United States and Kosovo, Rice said. "The establishment of these relations will reaffirm the special ties of friendship that have linked together the people of the United States and Kosovo."

In announcing its independence February 17, the Kosovo government said it was accepting the terms, in full, set down by U.N. Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari in 2007 to build a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo that will be independent, subject to a period of international supervision.

Kosovo, a nation of 2 million, has been a U.N. protectorate since 1999 and is policed by 16,000 NATO-led security forces. Kosovo had remained a part of Serbia even though it was under U.N. administration.

United States reaffirms its friendship with Serbia, an ally during two world wars.

"We invite Serbia's leaders to work together with the United States and our partners to accomplish shared goals, such as the protection of the rights, security, culture, and livelihood of the Serb community in Kosovo," Rice said.

The United States formally joined with major European states February 18 in recognizing Kosovo independence. France and Britain led European nations earlier.



*Kosovars wave an Albanian flag (L) and the flag of independent Kosovo (back) which was unveiled on Sunday at the parliament after the declaration of independence from Serbia was made in Pristina. (AFP/Armend Nimani)*

U.S. Representative Howard Berman, acting chairman of the House

Foreign Affairs Committee, added his support to the administration's recognition of the nation of Kosovo.

"I am proud to welcome this new member into the community of sovereign states, and I congratulate the people of Kosovo on this historic day," Berman said. "Now the hard work begins. Much remains to be done to ensure that Kosovo's transition is successful.

"The challenges ahead include tackling high unemployment and bolstering the country's weak economy, strengthening political institutions and the rule of law, and preserving security throughout the region," he said. ♦

Ahtisaari recommended that Kosovo be granted internationally supervised independence in 2007.

"In light of the conflicts of the 1990s, independence is the only viable option to promote stability in the region," Rice said. "The United States supports the Ahtisaari Plan and will work with its international partners to help implement it."

The unusual combination of factors found in the Kosovo situation, Rice says, is not to be found elsewhere, adding that "Kosovo cannot be seen as a precedent for any other situation in the world today."

At the same time, Rice said that the

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## U.S. Attorney General Visits Iraq To Support Legal System

Washington -- Establishing a functioning national legal system based on the rule of law is a critical element for the Iraqi government as it struggles to provide good governance. U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey acknowledges that building such a system based substantially on different cultures and customs is a serious challenge.

"The United States is at a critical juncture in Iraq, and the Justice Department is working to ensure sustainability of the freedom and security," Mukasey says. "Our civilian volunteers are working with the Iraqi people to build a legal system fashioned by cultures and customs very different from our own, but founded upon the same bedrock principles: due process and the rule of law."

Mukasey said February 13 in Baghdad that efforts by Justice Department staff stationed at the U.S. Embassy already have resulted in significant progress. In Iraq, he met with Chief Judge Medhat al Mahoud, the head of Iraq's Higher Judicial Council, and two other members of the Iraqi judiciary, the department said. The attorney general also held meetings with General David Petraeus, the senior U.S. military commander in Iraq, and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker.

"We will continue to pursue ways to help the Iraqi people achieve a stable and transparent government," Mukasey said.

Initially, the Justice Department's mission, beginning in 2003, was to assist and advise in the reconstitution of the Iraqi judicial and law enforcement systems. However, these efforts have been expanded.

The State Department reorganized its civilian and law enforcement efforts in March 2007, creating a sin-

Firearms and Explosives, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the U.S. Marshals Service.



*U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey, left, and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker during a press conference in the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad, Iraq Wednesday, Feb. 13, 2008.*

gle authority, a senior Justice Department official known as the rule of law coordinator at the U.S. Embassy. The coordinator works with Iraqis to support the establishment of the rule of law in Iraq. The coordinator oversees the work of more than 300 personnel and coordinates closely with the U.S. ambassador and Multi-National Force - Iraq, according to the Justice Department.

The Justice Department has taken a number of steps to assist the Iraqi government:

The Major Crimes Task Force, a joint Iraqi-U.S. organization, was formed in 2006 to address a rash of high-profile murders, assassinations and acts of sectarian violence and to provide training, support and mentoring for Iraqi law enforcement and task force members. The task force receives support from the FBI, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,

The FBI's legal attaché, a senior FBI special agent, serves as the law enforcement liaison to the embassy, the Multi-National Force - Iraq and the international community.

The Justice Department attaché is a senior department official who serves as the primary liaison to the Iraqi judiciary.

A Law and Order Task Force was formed in February 2007 to build essential Iraqi capacity for independent, evidence-based, transparent and evenhanded investigations and trials of major crimes before the Central Criminal Court of Iraq.

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

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**United States Leading Global Response To Crisis in Darfur, Sudan . . .**

*(Continued from page 22)*

contributions, amounting to roughly \$330 million through June 2008. Over the past three years, the United States spent more than \$450 million to build, operate, and maintain 34 peacekeeping base camps for African Union forces and also provided those troops with vehicles and communication equipment, which are now under the control of UNAMID.

The President is announcing the availability of \$100 million in U.S. funding to augment the training and equipping of African peacekeepers pledged to deploy under UNAMID. Up to \$12 million dollars of these new funds will help ensure that Rwanda's forces have the training and equipment they need. Already, the U.S. has helped train more than 7,000 Rwandans for peacekeeping in Darfur and spent more than \$17

million to ensure they are properly prepared, equipped, and on the ground.

**Political Process in Darfur**

The United States supports the United Nations and the African Union in renewing a political process between the Government of Sudan and those rebel groups that did not sign the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). The U.S. supports full implementation of the DPA as it creates broad structures for a political solution that will allow millions of people in Darfur to return to their homes and rebuild their lives in peace.

*(end fact sheet)*

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

**Texas Enjoys Unexpected Attention in Presidential Primary Battle . . .**

*(Continued from page 18)*

lost to Democrat Rodriguez in a 2006 special election.

Rodriguez has raised about \$1 million for the campaign while he awaits the outcome of the Republican primary.

Both national parties are watching the 23rd closely and could pump money and personnel into the campaign for the November general election, as they did in the 2006 contest. With its large Hispanic population, the 23rd Congressional District also is expected to play a major role in the Clinton-Obama showdown in Texas, the biggest prize remaining in the primary season, with 228 delegates at stake.

Clinton has won the Hispanic vote in other big states, such as Califor-

nia, and experts say she will need strong support from Mexican Americans in Texas if she hopes to blunt Obama's momentum.

"It's one of the linchpins of [Clinton's] strategy, to win Texas," Clinton adviser Andy Hernandez, a former Democratic National Committee staff member, told the San Antonio Express/News.

Obama is not surrendering the Hispanic vote without a fight. He has hired Representative Rodriguez's chief of staff, Adrian Saenz, as his Texas campaign director. Saenz is credited with directing Rodriguez's victory over Bonilla two years ago.

For the Republicans, McCain would like to finish off Huckabee in Texas. The Arizona senator has won endorsements from all major

Texas Republicans, including Governor Rick Perry, Cornyn, and Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, who is considered a possible vice presidential running mate.

"John McCain is going to carry Texas," says Representative Lamar Smith, whose San Antonio district adjoins the 23rd. He wants Huckabee to drop out to "benefit our party." But Huckabee is not persuaded. He believes he has strong support in the state, and he told NBC television, "We certainly see Texas in play."

San Antonio's former mayor, and Clinton supporter, Henry Cisneros, says the primary has brought unexpected drama to Texas.

As he puts it: "Who would have imagined Texas would have the say it's going to have?" ♦