



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

Health Programs Provide Basis for Sound Public Health Policymaking

The Ethiopian Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Program (FELTP), the first of its kind in Ethiopia, opened on Monday, Feb 2 with a ceremony at Zewditu Hospital, Addis Ababa. The Ethiopian Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Program is a comprehensive two-year competency-based training and service program designed to build sustainable public health expertise and capacity.

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Dr. Thomas Kenyon, Country Director for Centers of Disease Control and Prevention - Ethiopia (CDC-Ethiopia), gives opening remarks.

U.S. Troops and Local Partners Provide Medical

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – Service members from the U.S. Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) will conduct a series of Medical Civic Action Projects January 31 through February 13 in Dire Teyara, Aydora, Germam and Milo. The projects will provide basic medical treatment and hygiene items to the local communities.

The military medical professionals of the 360th Civil Affairs Brigade Functional Specialty Team will work side-by-side with Ethiopian medical professionals to provide direct patient care for local citizens. The U.S. military members and Ethiopian medical professionals will deliver preventive health presentations, distribute basic hygiene items and treat basic illnesses while sharing their expertise

and best practices.

This medical project contributes to the U.S. Government's partnership with Ethiopia to improve health care in the country and fight HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis. In fiscal year 2008, the American people, through various government agencies and programs including CJTF-HOA projects, the President's Emer-

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U.S. Gravely Concerned About Escalating Violence in Darfur

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States has expressed “grave concern” about recent bombing raids in a southern Darfur town in Sudan and ongoing fighting between Sudanese government forces and rebels.

The U.N. Security Council held a closed-door meeting on Darfur and other regional issues February 3. U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice said the council was told at its meeting that 28 bombs were dropped by government forces that morning in the south Darfur settlement of Muhajiriya, where fighting has raged between government troops and rebels from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and others for nearly two weeks.

“And the [U.N. Secretariat] had also reported that these [bombing raids] had occurred despite the fact that JEM forces have pulled back from the town,” Rice said. It has been proposed, she added, that “Muhajiriya be turned into a demilitarized area and UNAMID be allowed to take up positions throughout the area and protect civilians.”

UNAMID is the joint United Nations – African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur, which was authorized by a Security Council resolution in July

2007. The mission was authorized to support implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement and provide protection for civilians.

The peace agreement was signed in May 2006 under the auspices of the African Union and with United Nations support.



U.S. Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice

Rice said the bombardment continues and the Sudanese government has prevented UNAMID personnel from moving into the town to investigate, which is a violation of the status of forces agreement between UNAMID and the government.

“So this is clearly a very worrisome situation, and the risk that the violence will escalate, that the government will continue its bombing and indeed a ground campaign, despite the fact that the JEM is not in Muhajiriya anymore, is of grave concern,” Rice said.

The Security Council will be monitoring the crisis closely, and it will be working toward a presidential statement that will condemn the violence, call for a cease-fire and urge an end to bombing raids in the broader effort to protect civilians, Rice said.

The United Nations has reported that as many as 300,000 people have died and more than 2.5 million have been driven from their homes in the Darfur region of Sudan since rebel groups took up arms against the Sudanese government and its Janjaweed militia in 2003.

What actions should President Obama consider for national security? Comment on America.gov’s blog (<http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/>).

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

Efforts to Pressure Zimbabwe Continue Under Obama

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Zimbabwe's long-time ruler, Robert Mugabe, is not getting a reprieve from President Obama, who is actively continuing U.S. efforts to convince the international community, and particularly Zimbabwe's neighbors, that they must not stand by as the country's people continue to suffer from humanitarian and economic catastrophe and a lack of political freedom.

The United States increased targeted sanctions against leaders and supporters of Mugabe's regime in response to the country's sham presidential runoff election in June 2008 and the failure of Mugabe to negotiate with good faith in power-sharing talks with the opposition

Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). MDC won the March 2008 parliamentary elections and its presidential candidate, Morgan Tsvangirai, received the most presidential votes, but he was forced to withdraw from the runoff election as the result of violent attacks against his supporters.

Both the Obama and Bush administrations have recognized that although bilateral sanctions have had an impact, they have not convinced Mugabe to either step aside or share power in

a meaningful way. Peaceful democratic change in the landlocked country is much more likely to occur when Zimbabwe's neighbors in the Southern African Development Community take action.

OBAMA REACHES OUT TO SOUTH AFRICA DURING HIS FIRST WEEK

In a January 27 telephone call to South African President Kgalema Motlanthe, President Obama emphasized Pretoria's role as a regional leader and one of Africa's strong democracies. According to a White House statement, the two leaders discussed the situation in Zimbabwe and Obama "noted that South Africa holds a key role in helping to find a resolution to the political crisis" there.

Likewise, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has spoken with South African Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and African Union Commission Chairman Jean Ping. According to acting State Department spokesman Robert Wood, Clinton "is very interested in what's going on in Zimbabwe."

"We are going to do what we can, working with countries in the region, to try to put additional pressure on Mugabe to basically ... negotiate seriously" in power-sharing talks

with the MDC, Wood said January 28. But Mugabe "clearly is not interested in ... an equitable solution to the political crisis in the country, and we need to see further pressure

coming from the region."

President Obama named Susan Rice as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Rice has an extensive background in the African region, having served as assistant secretary of state for African affairs during the Clinton administration.

At her January 15 confirmation hearing in the U.S. Senate, Rice said the Obama administration would be pressuring Zimbabwe's neighbors. She added her belief that there is potential to work with both China and Russia, which previously vetoed U.N. Security Council resolutions targeting Zimbabwe, by maximizing common bilateral interests.

There is no reason why Russia and China "are unable to separate themselves from the regime of Robert Mugabe. ... Their interests no longer, frankly, coincide," Rice said.

MORE U.S. ASSISTANCE TO COMBAT CHOLERA

Meanwhile, the United States is working with others in the international community to try to alleviate the cholera epidemic and provide assistance to those who have been affected. The epidemic began in August 2008 and has affected all of the country's provinces, with 48,000 reported cases and 2,755 deaths from the disease as of January 22.

On January 28, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) said it is consigning nearly 440,000 bars of soap, valued at nearly \$365,000, to the U.N. Children's Fund. Cholera is a preventable dis-

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USAID has supplemented its food aid to Zimbabwe with emergency assistance due to the cholera epidemic.

Health Programs Provide Basis for Sound Public Health Policymaking . . .

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The Ethiopian FELTP is a partnership between the U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention – Ethiopia (CDC-Ethiopia), the Federal Ministry of Health, the Ethiopian Health and Nutrition Research Institute, Addis Ababa University School of Public Health, and the Ethiopian Public Health Association. The program is modeled after the Epidemic Intelligence Service Program, also known as the "Disease Detectives" at the U.S. CDC. Similar programs operate in other African countries and throughout the world to build local capacity to respond to significant public health challenges such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, malnutrition and other health issues.

Trainees will work within the Federal Ministry of Health and Regional Health Bureaus to better investigate disease outbreaks, improve disease surveillance, respond to public health emergencies, and use health data to make recommendations on setting health policy for the nation. CDC-Ethiopia is providing technical assistance and funding through PEPFAR (the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), including a Resident Advisor to assist the new program.

The trainees will attend academic courses and serve in field assignments with the Federal Ministry of Health and Regional Health Bureaus, where they will develop their skills while addressing pressing public

health challenges. Graduates will have the knowledge and expertise to assume leadership positions in the field of public health, mentor and train other health workers, and enhance Ethiopia's public health workforce.

41 applicants applied for the program and 13 were accepted in the first cohort. They all currently work in the field of public health and come from eight regions across Ethiopia. The selection process began with a written screening/assessment examination. Those successful in the examination then underwent intensive interviews. Plans are underway for a second cohort to begin later this year. ♦

U.S. Troops and Local Partners Provide Medical Care in Eastern Ethiopia . . .

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agency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and USAID, provided more than USD 375 million in health assistance to Ethiopia.

The work of CJTF-HOA's service members contributes to United States Government efforts to promote a better tomorrow for all Ethiopians through short-term projects that support clean water, functional schools, better roadways and improved medical facilities and care. CJTF-HOA's development

projects are part of a strategy of Cooperative Conflict Prevention, and contribute to the task force's overall mission to build security capacity, promote regional cooperation, and protect coalition interests to prevail against extremist activities. ♦

Efforts to Pressure Zimbabwe Continue Under Obama . . .

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ease, and clean drinking water and improved hygiene can help prevent it from spreading.

Humanitarian organizations will distribute the soap as part of a hygiene education program, USAID said.

The cholera epidemic occurred on top of continued food shortages in Zimbabwe, which was once a major food exporter. According to the World Food Programme, 7 million Zimbabweans, or more than half of the population, will need food assistance to survive until the next harvest in April.

USAID said it has provided more than \$264 million in food and health assistance to Zimbabwe since October 2007. The agency has also pledged \$6.8 million in emergency water, sanitation, hygiene and health assistance since the cholera epidemic broke out. ♦

Republicans Select African American to Lead Party

By Michelle Austein Brooks
Staff Writer

Washington — As the new head of the Republican National Committee (RNC), Michael Steele will be one of the most visible faces of the Republican Party and its first African-American chairman.

Steele, a former lieutenant governor of Maryland, was elected to a two-year term as chairman of the RNC January 30. It took more than five hours for the 168 members of the RNC (three from each state and territory) to award Steele a majority of votes among an original field of six candidates.

There are hundreds of state and local chapters of Republicans and Democrats, the two main political parties of the United States. Local organizations tend to operate fairly autonomously, but the RNC and its counterpart, the Democratic National Committee (DNC), are the main organizing bodies.

The national committees are most visible during presidential and congressional election years as they provide technical support to local chapters and raise funds for candidates in competitive races across the country. Both organizations maintain offices in Washington, close to the U.S. Capitol.

The RNC and DNC also set most of the rules for national conventions, which oversee the drafting of party

platforms, the nonbinding statements of a party's goals approved at each national convention.

Even in a year without presidential or congressional elections, the national committees remain busy, raising money for candidates and pro-

ginia Governor Tim Kaine, chairman of the DNC. Kaine offered his congratulations to Steele January 30, saying, "Together, we have the honor of leading our respective parties during one of the most important periods in our country's history. I look forward to working with

Chairman Steele as we set out to put partisanship and the politics of the past aside to get our economy working again."

After losing the White House and suffering congressional defeats in 2006 and 2008, the Republican Party faces many challenges as it seeks to rebuild itself and expand its influence. Party members are eager for Steele to take the party in a new direction that will bring in new future leaders and also reinvigorate the party base.



RNC Chairman Michael Steele will be one of the most visible faces of the Republican Party.

moting party positions and points of view. The committees also continue recruiting new members and encouraging active members to seek public office.

CHALLENGES AWAIT STEELE

A sitting president of the United States usually is recognized as the leader of his party, but the national committee chairman of the party not occupying the White House frequently emerges as that party's chief spokesman. Steele likely will articulate the Republican Party's views regularly at public appearances and on television programs.

He often will be countered by Vir-

"We stand proud as the conservative party of the United States," Steele said in his acceptance speech. "And we will make sure we work hard to make sure those principles, those values ... are part of helping set a new direction for this country."

In an interview on the Fox News Sunday television show February 1, Steele said Republican Party members will "reacquaint ourselves with the voters and help them appreciate exactly what we stand for and what we believe in."

In interviews, Steele said the RNC will do this by meeting with groups

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Impeachment Is Ultimate Legislative Check on Executive Power

By Michelle Austein Brooks
Staff Writer

Washington — When Illinois lawmakers voted to remove their governor from office January 29, they exercised a rarely used legislative right to remove an official from the executive branch of government.

Illinois state senators unanimously voted to remove Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich from office and barred him from holding public office in the state in the future. This step concluded weeks of legislative proceedings in which the state's House of Representatives voted to impeach Blagojevich, an action that showed the House had investigated allegations of misconduct and found sufficient grounds to justify further legislative action. It fell to the Illinois Senate to decide whether to sustain the impeachment and remove the governor from office.

"Today ends a painful episode for Illinois. For months, the state had been crippled by a crisis of leadership. Now that cloud has lifted," President Obama said.

Blagojevich is the seventh U.S. governor (but the first from the state of Illinois) to be removed from office.

Most states have a series of procedures, called impeachment proceedings, to remove from office a high-level official accused of wrongdoing. Many of these states' impeachment rules are modeled after those used by the U.S. Congress.

IMPEACHMENT AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

The U.S. Constitution grants Congress the sole authority to impeach

and try the president, vice president and "all civil officers of the United States." These officials can be "removed from office on impeachment for, and conviction of, treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors."

1998 – and neither impeachment was sustained. Another American president, Richard Nixon, resigned in 1974 after the House Judiciary Committee approved articles of impeachment but before the House of Representatives acted to impeach.



Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich was removed from office by impeachment proceedings on January 29, 2009

It is possible for an official to be impeached but not removed from office. The House of Representatives has the authority to impeach but only the Senate has the power to sustain an impeachment, effectively convicting an impeached official and removing him or her from office. It also is possible for the Senate to censure an impeached official — a form of public condemnation that falls short of impeachment and lets the official remain in office.

Sixteen officials have been impeached by the House, but only seven were sustained by the Senate. The list of those impeached includes two presidents – Andrew Johnson in 1868 and Bill Clinton in

A member of the House can introduce a bill of impeachment, but nonmembers also can ask the legislative body to consider a case. In recent times, an inquiry of impeachment has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee. The committee considers evidence and votes on whether it believes there is enough evidence for impeachment. The House then votes on whether to proceed with an impeachment hearing.

In an impeachment hearing, the Judiciary Committee conducts an investigation of the person's actions. The committee determines on what grounds the official could be impeached and drafts articles of im-

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peachment for the House to vote on. It takes a simple majority of representatives' votes to impeach an official.

If the House votes for impeachment, the case then goes to the Senate. The Senate proceedings are much like a typical trial. The House selects members who will represent its case before the Senate. The official is defended by his or her own attorneys. In the case of an impeached president, the chief justice of the Supreme Court presides over the trial.

The entire roster of senators acts as a jury. Evidence can be presented and witnesses can be heard. Opening and closing arguments are given. The impeached official can choose to attend the trial but is not required to do so.

Following the trial, senators vote on the articles of impeachment. If two-thirds of the senators vote to sustain the articles of impeachment, the person is removed from office. Senators also can vote on whether to bar an impeached official from holding public office in the future. This measure needs only a simple majority vote to pass.



President Clinton underwent impeachment but was acquitted by the Senate. No U.S. president has been removed from office.

Congress does not have the power to charge an impeached or convicted official with a crime, but law enforcement authorities can bring criminal or civil charges.

THE CASE OF ILLINOIS' GOVERNOR

Blagojevich has been accused of seeking bribes from those interested in filling the Illinois Senate seat vacated by Obama when he won the

presidential election. Allegations also have been made that Blagojevich tried to withhold state funds for Wrigley Field, home of the Chicago Cubs baseball team, unless members of the Chicago Tribune editorial board were fired. The newspaper and the stadium are owned by the Tribune Company.

Blagojevich likely will face criminal charges — he was arrested by federal authorities but has not yet been indicted— but an official need not be proven guilty of criminal wrongdoing to be impeached.

The Illinois Legislature's proceedings mirrored many of those used by the U.S. Congress. The Illinois House voted for impeachment; the Senate heard evidence in support of impeachment, including wire taps of the governor's discussions about the Senate seat and stadium funding. The governor gave a closing argument before senators voted 59–0 for removal.

Following Blagojevich's removal, Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn quickly was sworn into office as the new Illinois governor.

"The rule of law prevailed in Illinois," Quinn said. "We are ready to move forward." ♦

Republicans Select African American to Lead Party . . .

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that have lessened their support for Republicans in recent elections. This would include Hispanics and African Americans, who overwhelmingly favored Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election. Steele said his job is to "put good candidates in a position to win." He

is focusing on three big 2009 elections: gubernatorial races in Virginia and New Jersey in November and a special congressional election in New York, likely to be in March.

"We're going to be on the ground and engaged in all of those campaigns that are going to be important opportunities for us to re-

establish the brand for the party," Steele said. "We're not going to win all of them. But we're going to start to win again in important races that matter."

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

Black History Month Honors Legacy of Struggle and Triumph

By Louise Fenner
Staff Writer

Washington — Each February, Black History Month honors the struggles and triumphs of millions of American citizens over the most devastating obstacles — slavery, prejudice, poverty — as well as their contributions to the nation's cultural and political life.

In 2009, the inauguration of Barack Obama, America's first African-American president, lends Black History Month a special significance. Obama took the oath of office January 20, the day after Americans honored the memory of Martin Luther King Jr. with a federal holiday and national day of service. The late civil rights leader would have turned 80 on January 15.

In his inaugural address, President Obama acknowledged the historical importance of a moment in which "a man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath."

HONORING ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF BLACK AMERICANS

Black History Month was the inspiration of Carter G. Woodson, a noted scholar and historian, who instituted Negro History Week in 1926. He chose the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and the abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

The celebration was expanded to a month in 1976, the nation's bicen-

ennial. President Gerald R. Ford urged Americans to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

American history, from the experiences of free blacks in a land of slavery to the political aspirations of African Americans today," according to the ASALH Web site. "The centennial also provides an opportunity to explore the history of other



A man and his son see the bus in which Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in 1955, a landmark moment in the civil rights movement.

Woodson, the son of former slaves in Virginia, realized that the struggles and achievements of Americans of African descent were being ignored or misrepresented. He founded the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), which supports historical research, publishes a scholarly journal and sets the theme for Black History Month each year.

The theme for 2009, "The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas," honors the centennial of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and highlights "the problem of race and citizenship in

nations in the Americas, where former slaves also sought the fruits of citizenship."

John Fleming, ASALH president and director emeritus of the Cincinnati Museum Center, said Obama's heritage — a black father born in Kenya and a white mother born in the United States — "continues to reflect the contributions Africans and Europeans have made to American history from the very beginning."

Fleming said he believes Black History Month should focus on positive as well as negative aspects of the black experience. "Certainly, strug-

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Identity in America: Are Perspectives Shifting?

By Sonya Weakley
Staff Writer

“For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness.”

— President Barack Obama, January 20, 2009

“Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life.”

— John F. Kennedy, A Nation of Immigrants, 1958

Washington — Multicultural, plural, post-ethnic, post-racial. While these descriptors are widely debated among American scholars, writers, politicians and others, it is usually not debated that with the possible exception of the American Indian, to be American is to be, genealogically speaking, from somewhere else in the world.

In addition, the heritage of individual Americans increasingly is from more than one part of the patchwork that is the fabric of America. Questions such as “Where are you from?” or “What is your background?” can draw complex responses as these individuals use words to identify themselves such as “multiracial,” “multiethnic” or “hybrid.”

As a result of the mingling of many ethnicities, America may be evolving from a multicultural nation to a nation of multicultural people. According to the United States Census Bureau, by 2050, the total

“minority” population, which includes everyone except non-Hispanic, single-race whites, is projected to be 235.7 million out of a total U.S. population of 439 million, or nearly 54 percent.

Accordingly, the number of Americans who identify themselves as being of two or more races is pro-



The number of Americans of more than one race is rapidly growing — a result, in part, of the growing population of diverse cultures.

jected to more than triple, from 5.2 million in 2008 to 16.2 million in 2050. The Census Bureau started collecting multiracial information in 2000, when census respondents were for the first time given the option of identifying themselves in more than one category in the question on race.

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget decided in 1997 that “mark one or more races” should be included in the census based on “evidence of increasing numbers of children from interracial unions and the need to measure the increased diversity in the United States,” ac-

ording to the Census Bureau.

The decision sparked debate in America on the social and political impact of creating so many categories of race, but it also brought the idea of multiracial identity to the country’s collective consciousness. With the election of President Obama, who is of mixed race, the

question of race or ethnicity, how much it matters and what Americans think about it has become a popular topic for discussion.

SO WHO IS AN AMERICAN?

For the month of February, America.gov is joining the discussion and exploring how the ever-increasing diversity of the U.S. population is affecting the way Americans identify

themselves. Can Americans choose how and when to use ethnic heritage in describing themselves? If so, how do they decide which ethnicity to use? Can Americans choose not to be identified by any ethnicity or to use other social descriptors? Are all these choices part of being American?

A number of recent polls and other reports point to trends indicating shifts in American attitudes toward race and ethnicity that may be influencing how Americans think about their identities.

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Finding My Own Saffron Sky

By Crystal Grace Ofori
Staff Writer

Washington — At times, I feel like I have a dual personality. Although I speak English at work and at school, at home I speak Twi, the language of the Ashanti tribe and a language that I have spoken since I was 8.

My parents, both Ghanaian, have always made sure that I knew where they came from and what their culture was. I am proud of being a Ghanaian American, but it wasn't always that way. Like many Americans with ties around the world, I am proudly bilingual and multicultural, but at one point, I had a hard time mixing my inherited culture with my American one.

I lived for four years in Ghana with my grandparents, who immediately initiated me into a culture I had only been privy to through my parents' lenses. I was taught ideals that were similar to my American virtues: hard work, honesty, the value of family and pride in one's culture. But when I returned to American life at the age of 13, during that pivotal stage of adolescence and identity, I felt lost.

It was difficult readjusting to American teenage life. As teens were busy going to the mall and obsessing over different boy bands, I was trying to understand who I was and my new life. During this period, I shunned my Ghanaian culture and turned to everything American, trying to painfully erase all the years that I had been in Ghana. I felt

alienated and struggled to fit in because I wanted to be "regular" like the kids at my school. Like many hyphenated Americans, this was the point when I was stuck in limbo between the life I was leading in America and another culture that seemed so distant.

SAFFRON SKY

In her memoir *Saffron Sky*, Iranian-American Gelareh Asayesh faced these same challenges: trying to fit in while finding the bridge where she could go back and forth between her two cultures. "When I first came here, it was incredibly difficult,"

Asayesh said, "like stripping off one layer of skin and growing a new one."

I laughed when she described how high school was a series of mini shocks to her system, and I understood the yearning she had for life in Iran, just like I do for life in Ghana.

In her memoir, she freely illustrated her struggles and her eventual acceptance of her identity. "My goal has always been to assimilate America into my Iranian identity, rather than being assimilated," she said. "The process, however, was one of pushing away from the old — before I realized how much it meant to me and sought to reclaim it."

Through her struggles, I realized

that having two cultures was a gift and should not be a burden. I used to bristle at the mention of my Ghanaian heritage or when my mother wanted to speak Twi in public; now I find solace in the fact that I have another heritage to identify with.

Through yearly visits to Iran, constant calls with family and practicing the many customs of her homeland, Asayesh found stability. She believes that "the goal is to dance a sort of dance that keeps both sides in motion, alive, engaged in your identity and your life."

I now keep both identities alive, taking joy in African traditions, clothing, customs, foods, speaking, reading and writing the language, and I keep in contact with my family abroad. It is no longer a burden, because both cultures are intertwined in my daily life.



Ofori dances Adwoa, a traditional dance of the Ashanti tribe of Ghana, in Washington.



Ofori in Washington's Chinatown neighborhood

I have realized that being Ghanaian American helps me stand out from the rest of the crowd just like other hyphenated Americans, and Asayesh shares this same sentiment: "The world needs people who can inhabit skins other than their own," she said.

Crystal Grace Ofori is a senior at Mount Saint Mary's College in Maryland where she studies communications and French. She is working as an intern at the Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs.

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

Community-based Groups Combat Crime in American Cities

By **Burton Bollag**
Special Correspondent

Baltimore — One recent Tuesday evening, 14-year-old Troy Robinson was in a city park when his cousin, who was standing next to him, was shot and killed. The next day, his dark-skinned young face hardened by what he had witnessed, Troy spoke with America.gov about growing up in one of this city's worst neighborhoods.

"I see a lot of people with guns and selling drugs," he said, "things I shouldn't be seeing."

Yet in a community where more young men go to prison than to college, Troy said there is a positive force giving him hope: a small, private organization that works with young people who, like Troy, have been in trouble with the law. The group, called Reaching the Unreachable Outreach Ministry, is run by the Reverend André H. Humphrey, a 52-year-old Baptist minister who grew up in these same rough streets and was in trouble with the law as a teenager. "He's trying to teach me the right thing," said Troy.

Located in a row house in this high-crime neighborhood on the city's east side, the program provides training on computers and sewing machines. It helps young school dropouts get a high school equivalency diploma, teaches young people how to present themselves for employment and helps them find jobs. Just as important, the pro-



Ted Sutton, foreground, used to be a criminal. But now he helps teens like Jakiba King, background, stay out of gangs and in school.

gram provides a safe after-school haven — away from the pull of drug-dealing gangs — for children who may have no adult at home until evening.

Twice a week, Humphrey is called to a hospital or morgue to provide counseling to a distraught family that has lost a son to violence. He is also called to mediate disputes between gangs before the conflicts turn violent. The minister, a large man who looks younger than his years, said he is able to talk with

gang members because he "used to be a thug." Having run into trouble as a youngster, Humphrey has "street credibility," something social workers from more middle-class backgrounds may lack.

His program, which helps up to 100 young people each year, has gotten funding from private foundations, the city government and even Baltimore's police department. These groups believe that by giving young people an alternative to the gangs, Humphrey's project and others like it make neighborhoods safer. Baltimore, a major port on America's East Coast, long has been one of the country's most violent cities. For several decades, it has ranked among the top 10 U.S. cities in terms of murder rates, with nearly 300 homicides each year.

But after years in which Baltimore missed out on a nationwide trend of falling murder rates, the city appears to have registered a roughly 20 percent reduction for 2008.

Authorities attribute falling crime rates across the country in part to a growing number of local initiatives. Neighborhood patrols walk streets, without guns, to signal their presence and report suspicious activities to police. Churches and civic associations host activities for children and counseling for families. Victims'

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Obama Provides Emergency Funds for Gaza Relief

By Merle D. Kellerhals, Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama authorized the use of \$20.3 million in emergency funding for immediate humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees and conflict victims in the Gaza Strip, the U.S. State Department said.

The announcement follows remarks by U.S. Middle East special envoy George Mitchell, who said, "President Obama has expressed the deep concern of the United States about the loss of Palestinian life and the humanitarian needs in Gaza" at a briefing in Ramallah in the West Bank on January 29.

Mitchell is on a mission to the region to show American support for the Arab-Israeli peace process, and to consolidate a sustainable and durable cease-fire in Gaza. He met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and other senior Palestinian officials in Ramallah and Jerusalem January 29.

Mitchell met with U.N. relief director John Ging at a U.N. warehouse in Jerusalem January 30.

"U.S. government support for humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees and conflict victims now totals nearly \$120 million in [fiscal year] 2009, including nearly \$60 million in Gaza," the State Department announcement said.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made an urgent appeal for

\$613 million January 29 to cover the immediate recovery needs of the people in Gaza for the next six to nine months. He said a formal appeal will be announced February 2 in Geneva at the U.N. Mission.

Ban said, "Help is urgently needed,



Mideast envoy George Mitchell, right, talks with UNRWA Gaza Director John Ging about relief efforts for Gaza.

including food, clean water, shelter, medicine and the restoration of basic services.

"When I saw the people in Gaza, the destruction and severity of the challenges were beyond description."

U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THREE AGENCIES

Of the \$20.3 million in new emergency funds, \$13.5 million will go to the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), \$6 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross and \$800,000 to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of

Humanitarian Affairs. These agencies will distribute emergency food assistance, provide medical assistance and temporary shelter, create temporary employment, and restore access to electricity and drinkable water for people living in the Gaza Strip, the department said. About

1.4 million Palestinians live in Gaza.

"Today's contribution to UNRWA augments the \$85 million the United States contributed in December 2008 toward UNRWA's 2009 appeals," the department said.

UNRWA is the largest provider of humanitarian aid in Gaza, pro-

viding 70 percent of the population with emergency food assistance, essential health care and primary education. "We are working to develop a longer-term reconstruction [and] development effort with international partners," the State Department said.

The relief efforts have begun in earnest following a 22-day conflict between Israeli and Hamas forces. Hamas, a terrorist organization, seized control of the Gaza Strip from the Palestinian Authority in June 2007. The conflict began when Hamas launched dozens of rockets and mortars into southern Israel. Israel responded with an air

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Community-based Groups Combat Crime in American Cities . . .

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associations lobby for longer prison terms for criminals.

Ex-offenders have gotten particular attention for their efforts to stop gang violence and work with troubled teenagers. Edward "Ted" Sutton used to be an enforcer-for-hire for criminal groups. He says he turned his life around 15 years ago, after seeing close friends killed. He opened his home to gang members who were trying to go straight and he went to college to get an education. Now, he mentors troubled students in two public schools under the auspices of a nonprofit group, High Expectations.

"A lot of them don't think they'll live long," he said of the youngsters with whom he works, so they don't see the point of investing time and energy to get an education. Sutton tries to help them develop their talents, and has helped some start careers as artists, singers or security contractors. "I try to show

them that selling drugs is not the only option," he said.

Philip J. Leaf, director of Johns Hopkins University's Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence, said that some reformed criminals are "really effective" in mentoring and in intervening when gangs appear headed toward a clash.

"They don't have command and control, but they know the people who do," he said.

Leaf said that for much of U.S. history, immigrants, workers, churchgoers and others have formed associations to further their interests. In recent years, government agencies have increased their support of such initiatives, seeing such groups as essential to reducing crime.

"Clearly, there has been a recognition that the more local the organization, the better [its] ability to know the needs of the local people," said Leaf. The goal, he said, is "getting people to take responsibility

for their own [street] corners."

He added that a constant challenge for those working with the often undereducated young people in poor neighborhoods is finding them jobs that can provide at least some income and status as an alternative to the easy cash they can earn in the illegal drug trade.

Meanwhile, as Troy Robinson struggles to define his future, the murder of his cousin has given him reason to reject the gangs that hold sway over many youngsters in his neighborhood. "I don't want to end up like him, in the grave," he said.

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

Obama Provides Emergency Funds for Gaza Relief . . .

(Continued from page 12)

and ground offensive to halt the attacks.

In addition to the aid announced January 30 by the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development has provided more than \$3.7 million for emergency assistance to Gaza. "Food, milk powder, blankets, plastic sheeting and other nonfood items have been distributed to beneficiaries, and the distributions are con-

tinuing," the department said.

What actions should President Obama consider for national security? Comment on America.gov's blog (<http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/>).

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

Special Envoy Mitchell to Return to Middle East This Month

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Middle East special envoy George Mitchell is beginning what will become high-level engagement by the United States in trying to end the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, says Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Mitchell just completed an eight-day mission of consultations with several Middle Eastern leaders to keep the United States actively engaged in finding a resolution to the stalemate plaguing the long-running peace process.

"We are looking to work with all the parties to try to help them make progress toward a negotiated agreement that would end the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, create an independent and viable Palestinian state in both the West Bank and Gaza, and provide Israel with the peace and security that it has sought," Clinton said February 3 during a State Department briefing with Mitchell.

Mitchell will return to the region before the end of February, Clinton said. "We are just at the beginning of this deep and consistent engagement," she said.

Mitchell, appointed special envoy January 22, traveled to Egypt, Israel, the West Bank, Jordan and Saudi Arabia before stopping in Paris on his return. Clinton and Mitchell are expected to meet with President Obama February 4 at the White House for a full briefing on Mitchell's meetings with Middle

Eastern leaders.

Part of Mitchell's mission has been to consolidate gains after a Gaza cease-fire was implemented in late January by Israel and Hamas, establish an effective anti-smuggling



US Middle East envoy George Mitchell arrives for a meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah II in Amman.

and interdiction regime to prevent Hamas from rearming, help reopen border crossings, and develop an effective response to the humanitarian needs of the Palestinians in Gaza and Gaza reconstruction.

"It's extremely difficult for all concerned there now, and they recognize widely that American diplomacy can, and I believe will, be helpful in resolving the differences and moving forward toward the peace and stability that everyone

wants," Mitchell said at the briefing. "The situation is obviously complex and difficult, and there are no easy or risk-free courses of action."

Clinton said the United States is working with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. And Clinton also repeated the demand that Hamas meet several conditions before it can join discussions on the future of the Palestinian state.

"Hamas knows the conditions that have been set forth. They must renounce violence. They must recognize Israel. And they must agree to abide by prior agreements that were entered into by the Palestinian Authority," she said. "Our conditions with respect to Hamas have not and will not change."

Continuing rocket attacks from inside Gaza into southern Israel do little to improve security and improve the peace process, she said.

What actions should President Obama consider for national security? Comment on America.gov's blog (<http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/>).

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

Will Iran Accept America's "Open Hand"?

By David McKeeby
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama wants to bring change to nearly 30 years of strained ties between Iran and the United States.

"If countries like Iran are willing to unclench their fist, they will find an extended hand from us," Obama said in a January 27 interview with the Saudi satellite channel al-Arabiya.

The United States broke diplomatic relations with Iran in 1980 after militants backed by Iran's revolutionary government seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and held its diplomats hostage for 444 days. Since then, relations have been further chilled by Iran's support of international terrorist organizations destabilizing the Middle East, such as Hezbollah and Hamas; the Iranian government's record of human rights abuses against its own citizens; and Iran's internationally controversial nuclear program, which its leaders claim is aimed at developing nuclear energy, but a growing number of nations — including the United States — suspects is a covert drive to develop nuclear weapons.

Obama acknowledged these challenges, pledging that his administration will lay out a framework over the next several months for how the United States will proceed with Iran. "The Iranian people are a great people, and Persian civilization is a great civilization," Obama said. "We can have legitimate disagreements but still be respectful."

While the governments of Switzerland and Pakistan long have served as official intermediaries between

the countries, U.S. and Iranian envoys have cooperated in efforts to stabilize Afghanistan and more recently have held discussions on the future of Iraq, Tehran's neighbor and one-time regional rival when it was under the rule of dictator Saddam Hussein. But experts agree that building on these limited contacts, as well as U.S.-sponsored cultural and exchange programs with Iran, will prove a daunting

Obama supported the group's findings, and two of its members serve in his administration: CIA Director Leon Panetta and Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who served briefly in the group before returning to government.

"The regional and nuclear ambitions of Iran continue to pose enormous challenges to the U.S.," Gates told a Senate panel January 27, stress-



Iranian reformist daily newspapers and their coverage of U.S. President Barack Obama's inauguration ceremony in Washington D.C. are seen in Tehran, Iran

challenge to the new administration.

In recent years, many former U.S. officials and academic experts have called for reassessing America's diplomatic approach to Iran. The Iraq Study Group — a bipartisan commission chaired by former Secretary of State James Baker and former congressman Lee Hamilton — released a 2006 report urging the United States to enter into direct talks with Iran and regional ally Syria on stabilizing Iraq and the broader Middle East. As a senator,

ing two "nonmilitary" factors that may shape Iran's future course: economic disruptions caused by low oil prices and relations with a new, democratic and increasingly self-sufficient Iraq.

Breaking the diplomatic deadlock over Iran's nuclear ambitions could provide an opening, experts say. In 2006, Iran suspended the International Atomic Energy Agency's authority to conduct no-notice inspections of its nuclear sites, and it refused to answer questions about

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Will Iran Accept America's "Open Hand"? . . .

(Continued from page 15)

weapons-related elements of its research efforts.

Since then, the U.N. Security Council has imposed three rounds of sanctions on government agencies, Iranian officials, banks and other institutions linked to the program. The council's five permanent members — China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States — have joined with Germany to form the "P5 + 1," which has worked to convince Iran to suspend enrichment and come to the negotiating table.

"We remain deeply concerned about the threat that Iran's nuclear pro-

gram poses to the region, indeed to the United States and the entire international community," said Susan Rice, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, who reiterated the administration's commitment to "direct diplomacy" with Tehran. "We will look at what is necessary and appropriate with respect to maintaining pressure toward that goal of ending Iran's nuclear program."

Representatives from the P5 + 1 group are scheduled to meet in Germany on February 4. In the near term, international deliberations over Iran's nuclear program may provide further clues on how U.S. policymakers will proceed toward the goal of engaging diplomatically with Iran.

"The dialogue and diplomacy must go hand in hand with a very firm message from the United States and the international community that Iran needs to meet its obligations as defined by the Security Council, and its continued refusal to do so will only cause pressure to increase," Rice said.

"There is a clear opportunity for the Iranians, as the president expressed in his interview, to demonstrate some willingness to engage meaningfully with the international community," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told reporters January 28. "Whether or not that hand becomes less clenched is really up to them." ♦

Black History Month Honors Legacy of Struggle and Triumph . . .

(Continued from page 8)

gle has been an ongoing theme in our history from the very beginning. However, we were not slaves prior to being captured in Africa — and while slavery was part of our experience for 250 years, we have a hundred-and-some years in freedom that we also need to deal with."

He said he has seen "substantial progress on many fronts," but "at the same time there are still major problems that have to be addressed, one being the permanent underclass in urban areas now. We don't seem to be able to break that cycle of poverty. And there are still some major rural pockets of poverty" such as in the Mississippi Delta.

"I'm glad to see the National African American Museum being developed on the Mall, which will tell a much broader story," said Fleming. In 2003, President Bush signed legislation to establish the new museum, which will be located on the National Mall near the Washington Monument. Although the new museum has not yet been built, it launched a photo exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery late in 2007 that is traveling to museums around the country through 2011.

"I think that African-American history gets more attention during February than during any other time of year," Fleming said, "and I think it's an opportunity for us in the field to emphasize that it is something that should be studied throughout the year."

Each year, the U.S. president honors Black History Month, or African-American History Month as it is also called, with a proclamation and a celebration at the White House. States and cities hold their own events around the country, and media feature topics related to black history.

ASALH has its headquarters in Washington, where Woodson lived from 1915 until his death in 1950. His home is designated a national historic site. More information is available at the ASALH (<http://www.asalh.org/>) Web site.

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

Military Recruiting Numbers Climb in Weak Economy

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
Staff Writer

Washington — Almost every day another company announces worker layoffs: General Motors, Starbucks, Sprint, Target, Caterpillar and Home Depot in recent weeks, all marching to the drumbeat of shrinking manufacturing and retail sales.

Neither small nor large organizations seem immune to the economic downturn, with one exception: the federal government. And within the government, the U.S. armed forces, in particular, are enjoying a hiring surge. The most recent year (2008) was the strongest military recruiting year in the past four. With the number of unemployed workers hovering around 11 million, all the services met recruiting goals in the initial weeks of 2009.

Each year, the military brings in more than 300,000 new recruits so it can maintain a 2.2 million force of sailors, soldiers, airmen and Marines. But while the door to the military is always open, military recruiters are fielding more queries and meeting with a new receptivity from potential candidates.

Recruiters report that they are seeing older walk-ins as a result of a battered economy. Changes in recruitment rules — the Army, for example, in 2006 raised its enlistment age limit from 35 to 42 — are also behind interest from older candidates.

With conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Army brought in more than 80,000 new recruits in 2008, while the Marines filled 38,000 positions. The Army's goal is to add another 65,000 in 2009, to reach a total of just more than 500,000. The Ma-

rines are seeking another 10,000, to reach a strength of roughly 200,000.

It is a "seller's market," according to anecdotal reports from Marine recruiters.

David Chu, who served as Defense Secretary Robert Gates' senior policy adviser for recruiting during the Bush administration, said the military does benefit "when things look less positive in civil society." Job losses in 2008 were a record 2.6 million, pushing the unemployment rate to 7.2, the worst since 1993.

Thus, interest in military jobs is not surprising. Chu said the difficult economy has created an opening for recruiters to make their pitch.

Curtis Gilroy, the Pentagon's guru for recruiting statistics, told reporters in 2008 that military recruiting is always challenging, regardless of unemployment figures. Challenges include multiple deployments to combat zones in the Middle East and South Asia, although President Obama has pledged to put more security responsibility on Iraqis in the coming months.

In a February 1 interview with the NBC television's Today Show, Gilroy said that is "good news for not only the troops in the field, but



Army recruiting is up even as the U.S. economy is in decline.

also their families, who are carrying an enormous burden."

ATTRACTIVE BENEFITS AID RECRUITING AND RETENTION

The military has a lot to offer a construction worker who has seen projects evaporate and is looking for a stable income, or a high school graduate in search of a dynamic career path.

The Defense Department spends a chunk of money each year on recruiting bonuses — last year it was \$500 million. The Army, for example, offers an average signing bonus of \$18,000. Not everyone receives a bonus, but some Army recruits

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World Cancer Day Targets Growing Burden of Disease

By Cheryl Pellerin
Staff Writer

Washington - Cancer, a general term for at least 200 different diseases, is one of the leading causes of death around the world. Every year on February 4, World Cancer Day encourages prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

In 2009, children are a focus of the International Union Against Cancer (UICC, from its French acronym), a nonprofit global consortium of 333 member organizations in 104 countries. UICC organized the first World Cancer Day in 2006.

On World Cancer Day 2009, with the World Health Organization (WHO), UICC is launching "I Love My Healthy Active Childhood," a yearlong campaign during which the organization will work with parents, teachers and decision makers worldwide to encourage kids to eat a healthy diet, be physically active and maintain a healthy body weight.

Being overweight or obese is shown to increase the risk of cancer among adults, and the prevalence of overweight and obesity is rising dramatically among adults and children. According to WHO, 1 billion adults are overweight and at least 300 million of them are clinically obese.

The International Obesity Taskforce estimates that one of every 10 school-age children is overweight. Of these, 30 million to 45 million children ? 2 percent to 3 percent of children ages 5 to 17? are obese.

"The costs of this disease in terms of human life and economic impact

are devastating," Dr. Anna Barker, deputy director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), part of the U.S. National Institutes of Health and a UICC member, told America.gov. "We've got to mitigate cancer in every country around the world. To do that we're going to have to work together."

SILENT EPIDEMIC

Despite the focus on children, cancer is primarily a disease of aging populations. Cancer incidence rises dramatically with age, according to WHO, most likely as the result of a buildup of risks for specific cancers that increase with age. Most cancers occur in people older than age 65.

Aging populations are an issue in the developed world and increasingly in the developing world, Barker said. In countries like Japan and the United States, baby boomers ? the generation born between 1946 and 1964, according to the U.S. Census Bureau ? are moving into that age range in large numbers.

"We're all going to see some dramatic increases in cancer in as little as 10 years," she said. "In 20 years it will be quite dramatic around the world."

Globally, cancer deaths will increase from 7.4 million in 2004 to 11.8 million in 2030, according to World Health Statistics 2008, published in May 2008 and presenting the most recent health statistics for 193 WHO member states on 73 health indicators.



Cigarette smoking causes 87 percent of lung cancer deaths, according to the U.S. National Cancer Institute.

"It's a silent epidemic developing out there," Barker added, "that people aren't paying nearly enough attention to."

MUTUAL INTERESTS

In its own attempt to reduce the international burden of cancer, NCI has undertaken a range of initiatives in Latin America and China.

In Latin America, NCI is developing partnerships with officials in Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Argentina and Mexico to work through cancer research centers and hospitals in those countries to identify major cancer-control needs.

"We're working with many countries to help them define their cancer problems," Barker said. This includes understanding their cancer statistics and establishing cancer registries ? systematic collections of cancer and tumor disease data.

"We are setting up agreements with these countries to engage in collaborative programs and launch pilot programs in areas such as clinical

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World Cancer Day Targets Growing Burden of Disease . . .

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trials and technology transfer to build capabilities," she said. The first partnership will launch in March with a workshop designed to develop a pilot project for breast cancer.

Early agreements between U.S. and Chinese institutions led to collaborations in epidemiology, basic cancer research, studies of infectious disease and cancer, and traditional Chinese medicine.

"We have also trained a large number of students from China over the years in our intramural program," Barker said. "Many of these alumni now represent a great deal of the leadership in the major research and clinical cancer centers across China."

In 2008, NCI posted Dr. Julie Schneider in Beijing as an NIH field officer, and the institute is expanding its China-based efforts in molecular epidemiology and establishing new initiatives in nanotechnology and genomics.

In November the United States and China will hold a 30th anniversary symposium in China to celebrate the early agreements.

International collaboration, Barker said, is becoming a bridge that countries can walk across to join forces and mutually agree on the fact that they need to control cancer globally.

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

Identity in America: Are Perspectives Shifting? . . .

(Continued from page 9)

In an ABC News poll conducted December 19, 2008, to January 4, 2009, more than half the respondents who were black said they think of themselves first as American. That 51 percent is up from 46 percent in September 2008. Blacks age 50 and older call themselves American first by a margin of 2 to 1.

In an October 2008 poll by the American Anti-Defamation League, 66 percent of respondents see the growth in "minority" populations in the United States as an advantage in building a strong economy. In 1992, only 39 percent held that view.

In his September 2008 report titled "The Kerner Commission Report Plus Four Decades: What Has Changed? What Has Not?," Rey-

nolds Farley, a sociologist at the University of Michigan's Population Studies Center, details a number of "pervasive changes in the racial attitudes and beliefs of whites" and cites the significant increase in interracial marriages as an example.

In 1968, when the Kerner Commission, established by President Johnson to investigate the causes of race riots, issued its report, about 1 percent of black married men had white spouses. In 2006, that proportion had increased to 14 percent, Farley reports.

He also notes that in the 1996 General Social Survey by the University of Chicago, 92 percent of white respondents said they would vote for a black presidential candidate if their party nominated a qualified one.

JOIN THE JOURNEY

During February, America.gov will consider ideas and thoughts on race, ethnicity and identity through various elements, including pieces on the role of blogs in fueling the discussion and how public exhibits are introducing new ways of thinking, a review of American immigration history, a photo essay of people whose quotes provide food for thought, first-person documentation of personal experiences, videos of people who share their insights, interactive tools and more.

Come explore identity and diversity (<http://amlife.america.gov/amlife/diversity/index.html>) with America.gov.

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

Knowledge Centers Could Help Regions Cope with Climate Change

This is the second article in a series about steps to address the effects of climate change at regional and local levels.

By Cheryl Pellerin
Staff Writer

Washington — Carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere by human activities is causing changes in Earth's surface temperature, rainfall and sea level that are measurable now, new research says, and that will continue for the next thousand years.

Susan Solomon, a senior scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Earth System Research Laboratory in Boulder, Colorado, led the study, published the week of January 26 in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The work "convinced us that current choices regarding carbon dioxide emissions will have legacies that will irreversibly change the planet," Solomon said in a January 26 statement. "It has long been known that some of the carbon dioxide emitted by human activities stays in the atmosphere for thousands of years. But the new study advances the understanding of how this affects the climate system." Also from NOAA, a preliminary analysis by the agency's National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, North Carolina, reported January 14 that 2008 tied with 2001 as the eighth-warmest year on record for planet Earth, based on the combined average of worldwide land and ocean surface temperatures through December 2008.

DECISION-QUALITY KNOWLEDGE

Direct observations of oceans, land surfaces, the atmosphere and glaciers have made it possible for scientists to state with more than 90 percent certainty that Earth's climate is warming and human activities are driving the change.

The measurements come from a range of observation networks



*Parched ground cracks in a wheat field during the hot European summer of 2006
(Photo istock photo/Susan Stewart)*

(weather balloons, ships, weather stations, satellites and ocean buoys) that crisscross the planet, sampling air and water and transmitting data to scientists around the globe.

NOAA, NASA, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy, universities, international scientific institutions and others collect and analyze the data that feed complex computer-based cli-

mate models. The models produce illustrations of the climate on a global scale to a generalized timeline.

"The ocean of sensor data makes for good science but its benefits outside that realm remain limited," Ronald Sugar, chairman and chief executive officer of Northrop Grumman Corp., said during a December 5, 2008, briefing in Washington on climate change and Earth observations.

"What if all that raw environmental data could be turned into practical, decision-quality knowledge for use by the greater society," he asked, to help inform public policy and business decisions at a regional or even local level?

GLOBAL CHANGE, LOCAL EFFECTS

Climate change is a planetary process but its effects are already at work at regional and local levels ? experienced by those involved in coastal development, weather forecasting, ecosystems and wildlife, agriculture, fisheries, power generation, conservation, water services, public health, emergency response and other activities.

A system of regional decision-support centers, Sugar suggested, could act as knowledge portals accessible to national, regional, local and private decision-makers who will be responsible for dealing with the effects of an evolving climate over 10 years or 20 years or 100 years.

Such centers, David Green of NOAA's National Weather Service

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See also

<http://www.america.gov>

Telling America's story

Military Recruiting Numbers Climb . . .

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have received bonuses as high as \$40,000. Beyond the signing bonus and guaranteed employment, the military offers medical coverage, housing, special pay for certain skills, vocational training, opportunities to lead, experienced mentors, travel and educational benefits.

Secretary Gates told the Senate Armed Services Committee on January 27 that enhanced educational benefits "have contributed to a greater willingness" of potential recruits to sign on. An updated GI Bill (the Servicemen's Readjustment Act) is an attractive new recruiting tool. It will be phased in during the summer of 2009. Anyone who completes three years of active duty will receive four years of paid tuition at any public college. A candidate can apply the tuition benefit to any private university. Unused educational benefits will be transferable to spouses and children.

Chu said retention figures are also strong. Early 2009 statistics for the four core services exceed those recorded at the end of 2008. He said pay incentives, fringe benefits and interesting assignments are contributing to retention.

Army retention efforts include a new fund to help soldiers buy a home or start a business. The military also forgives loans as a way of retaining talent and it offers bonuses for proficiency in certain languages.

For more information about Defense Department recruiting programs, see Today's Military (<http://www.todaysmilitary.com/>), a Department of Defense Web site.

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Knowledge Centers Could Help Regions Cope with Climate Change . . .

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in Washington told America.gov, "would go beyond warning and give people real understanding of not only what's impending but what to do about it — a full package of knowledge" for each sector that will be affected.

Climate forecasts create opportunities for society to prepare, Edward Miles and colleagues wrote in a 2006 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences study, "An Approach to Designing a National Climate Service."

"The impacts of the 1997–1998 El Nino on the U.S., predicted with 6 months' notice as a result of improved climate observations and other forecasting advances, cost the U.S. an estimated \$4.2 [billion]–4.5 billion (1998 dollars)

and 189 lives," the authors, from the Climate Impacts Group at the University of Washington-Seattle, wrote.

But an estimated 850 lives were saved and as much as \$19.9 billion in economic gains were realized as a result, according to the study.

INTEGRATING OBSERVATIONS

The first function of a National Climate Service, Miles' team wrote, is to integrate global, national and regional observations infrastructure to produce information and assessments useful to those involved. The service, they said, should be run by the director of NOAA's Climate Program Office, which now administers observations and research.

During Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Green said, the National Weather Service gave Louisiana and the other affected states 56 hours notice that the Category 3 storm would make landfall.

"They had the information," Green said, "but they didn't have knowledge on the ground about the roles of the federal agencies and the roles of the state and local agencies. They were arguing — what's the state role, what's the local role — that knowledge wasn't there."

"A climate service would actually produce knowledge," Chet Koblinsky, director of NOAA's Climate Program Office, told America.gov. "It would monitor, it would develop predictions and capabilities and allow a dialogue with the user community and provide that interaction." ♦