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Weekly Special Report

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U.S. Nurses Travel to Africa to Boost HIV/AIDS Treatment, Care

By Erika Gebel
Special Correspondent

Washington — A groundbreaking program called Nurses Strengthening Our AIDS Response, or simply Nurses SOAR, is sending nurses specially trained in HIV/AIDS care from the United States to hospitals and clinics in Africa to act as mentors for increasingly burdened nursing staffs.

A child from the Andile School choir sings during World AIDS Day in Cape Town, South Africa, December 1, 2008.

In 2007, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 75 percent of AIDS deaths and 67 percent of people living with HIV, according to the United Nations' biennial report on HIV/AIDS. Much of the burden of caring for the stricken has fallen to nurses.

SOAR funding comes largely through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and is administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Launched in 2003 and

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Inauguration Celebrates Continuity of American

Washington — When Barack Obama takes the oath of office on January 20, 2009, it will mark the 56th time that a U.S. president has been sworn in for a four-year term since 1789, when George Washington first took the same oath.

George Washington (2R) taking oath of office as first U.S. president in engraving entitled: Inauguration of George Washington.

During that period, eight presidents died in office and one resigned; each time, the vice president took the same oath, and completed the four-year term.

Many inaugural events have been added dur-

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renewed in 2008, PEPFAR is "the largest commitment by any nation to combat a single disease in history," according to the PEPFAR Web site.

Nurses SOAR is a partnership among the Georgetown University School of Nursing and Health Studies in Washington, the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care, the Duke University School of Nursing in North Carolina, the Catholic Medical Mission Board in New York and health care organizations throughout Lesotho, South Africa and Swaziland.

The purpose of Nurses SOAR is to strengthen nurses' capacity to deliver HIV/AIDS services. The program does this by building the leadership skills of nurses, building communities of self-care, building HIV/AIDS knowledge and clinical skills, and emphasizing applying the knowledge in clinical nursing care.

Many of the activities are implemented by expert HIV/AIDS nurse volunteers from the United States and faculty from Georgetown and Duke universities.

A COMMITTED CREW

All SOAR participants must be certified in HIV care, be members of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care and be committed to improving nursing care, said Kevin Mallinson, an assistant professor at the School of Nursing and Health Studies at Georgetown University and the program's principal investigator.

"All members are volunteers," Mallinson said. "They volunteer their own time," and the program provides funds for travel, lodging and meals. Since January 2008, the program has sent some 35 nurses to be mentors in Africa, each for three to five weeks.

Each site receives two or more mentors at a time. After one group goes home, others may come to pick up where they left off.

"The reason I believe in this program is it's not about you. You can't expect to go over there and be the only person to make a difference," said Sandy Sheble-Hall, one of the first mentors deployed. "You have to believe the program will make a difference."

MEETING NEEDS

From his 26 years of experience as an HIV/AIDS nurse, Mallinson says he understands the needs of a nursing staff bombarded by a deadly epidemic. Many programs that send health care workers to Africa focus on intensive classroom training on complicated topics, he said, but SOAR is "teaching people the basics."

In recent years, because of initiatives like PEPFAR, anti-retroviral therapy has become available in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Anti-retrovirals can boost the immune system and keep down the level of virus in people with AIDS, a radical shift from the relentless deterioration faced by people with AIDS before such therapy became available.

"Nurses there have experience with AIDS, but they don't have experience in anti-retroviral treatment. It's a big black hole," said Sheble-Hall, who along with other SOAR mentors coaches patients and nurses about side effects of the new drug regimes.

"If they take [anti-retrovirals], they may initially feel sicker. This side effect will go away, but imagine giving someone something and they feel worse," Mallinson said. "Mentors can help with communicating this idea."

BEYOND NURSING

A unique facet of the Nurses SOAR program involves grief counseling.

"People here are overwhelmed by debilitation and death. Orphan numbers are beyond belief," Mallinson said. "One in four nurses where we are now has HIV. They have to deal with their own HIV as well as family members who die."

Because dealing with HIV/AIDS emotionally burdens the nurses, as part of the program, Mallinson takes them away for a weekend of grief counseling and fellowship.

"After a communal intervention to help nurses deal with their loss and grief, they become bonded," Mallinson said. "One of the most successful things the program has achieved is this intervention."

Initial funding for SOAR will end in May 2009. If funding is renewed, the program will extend from three to six the number of countries it serves.

And SOAR organizers are not worried about running out of U.S. nurses willing to participate — of the 33 SOAR nurses who have come home, 31 have asked to return, including Sheble-Hall, who will go back to Africa in March. ♦

Inauguration Celebrates Continuity of American Democracy . . .

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ing the past 220 years, but the steps that the president-elect follows to take the constitutionally mandated oath of office, the central event of the inauguration, are essentially unchanged.

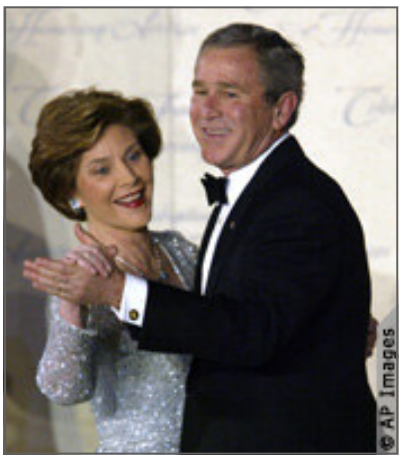
The oath will be administered at the U.S. Capitol, in a ceremony on the west front of the building, overlooking the National Mall, as it has been since 1801 when Thomas Jefferson was sworn in there. The Supreme Court chief justice first administered the oath in 1797 to John Adams.

The swearing-in ceremony — televised since 1949 — will be attended by Obama's family, past and future Cabinet members, members of the Senate and House of Representatives, Supreme Court justices and many invited guests.

Joe Biden will be sworn in as vice president prior to Obama taking the oath of office, with the oath administered by Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens. The vice presidential oath has been part of inauguration ceremonies only since 1937, President Franklin Roosevelt's second inauguration. Previously, the vice president was sworn in at a Senate ceremony because the Constitution designates the vice president as president of the Senate.

On January 20, Obama will stand before a judge — in this case Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts — and swear the 35-word oath prescribed in Article II, Section 1, of the Constitution:

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."



President Bush and first lady Laura Bush dance at an inaugural ball in 2005. There will be many balls in honor of Barack Obama.

When taking the oath, Obama will place his hand on the same Bible President Lincoln used at his first inauguration in 1861. The Bible is currently part of a collection at the Library of Congress. Although a Bible is traditionally used at the swearing in, it is not a constitutional requirement.

The 20th Amendment to the Constitution, adopted in 1933, sets the time and date for the presidential oath at noon on January 20. In the early days of the nation, when wintertime travel was difficult, inaugurations were held in March.

As in previous inaugural ceremonies, going back to that of George Washington, after taking the oath President Obama will give an inaugural address that outlines the themes for his four years in office.

OTHER INAUGURAL EVENTS

Many elements have been added to the inaugural program over time. President Obama's inauguration will follow the trend of recent years and feature several days of dinners, balls, receptions and other events focused on the theme of "Renewing America's Promise."

Obama and Biden will arrive in Washington, via train, on January 17. The first inaugural celebration will take place on the afternoon of January 18, with welcoming events throughout the city. Throughout the weekend, there will be festivities honoring the incoming president.

On January 19, Martin Luther King Day, the president-elect and vice president-elect will participate in a day of community service.

On the morning of January 20, the president and president-elect likely will meet with outgoing President Bush at the White House and travel to the Capitol together.

Following the noon swearing-in ceremony at the Capitol and the new president's speech, President Bush and first lady Laura Bush will leave Washington that day, as private citizens.

The new president and vice president will make their way from the Capitol back to the White House, where they will view a traditional parade that begins at the Capitol and follows a 1.7-mile (2.7-kilometers) route up Pennsylvania Avenue and past the White House.

In the evening there will be many formal inaugural balls — a few of which the Obamas will attend. Typically, the new first lady's gown for this evening is big news in the fashion world; the dress eventually will make its way into the Smithsonian Institution's collection of inaugural gowns. ♦

Public-Private Partners Bolster Geosciences Training in Africa

By Cheryl Pellerin
Staff Writer

Washington — Beneath the surface of Earth's second-largest continent is a wealth of minerals, petroleum, water and geothermal energy. African scientists are working to develop and manage this vast resource, but more scientists are needed to strengthen the work force in Africa's natural-resource sector and drive economic growth.

Four years into an ambitious 10-year public-private effort to boost the capacity of African universities to train world-class geoscientists, the AfricaArray program has completed its goals for phase one and is pushing into phase two.

"We started with in-kind support from the three founding partners," Andrew Nyblade, a professor of geosciences at Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) and AfricaArray co-director, told America.gov. These are the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, Penn State, and the Council for Geoscience in Pretoria, South Africa — formerly the South African Geological Survey.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

The fledgling Africa-to-Africa educational support system is aligned with the New Partnership for Africa's Development, a strategic framework for Africa's renewal adopted by the African Union in 2001 to eradicate poverty, promote sustainable growth and development, enhance Africa's integration into the global economy and accelerate the empowerment of women.

Phase one, 2004–2007, Nyblade said, focused on revitalizing the geophysics program at the University of Witwatersrand.

That effort included raising money to support a world-class seismology researcher at the university; acquiring computers, geophysical equipment and technical support; and setting up a network of 30 seismic stations in 13 countries, mainly in eastern and southern Africa but with two stations in Cameroon in western Africa.

An international geophysics course was established and a multiproject research program was initiated.

To store and manage the data generated by AfricaArray, the Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology, a consortium of universities established in 1984 with support from the U.S. National Science Foundation, made available its data management and distribution facilities.

Today, AfricaArray has hundreds of partners across industry, academia and government. Some underwrite grants and contracts; others contribute equipment, offer technical assistance or offer access to data sets or research sites; some supervise students, provide student scholarships or work with student interns.

STARTING WITH SEISMOLOGY

The AfricaArray founders settled on seismology — the science of earthquakes and mechanical properties of the Earth — as a way to launch the continentwide program for reasons local and global.

Seismology students learn about the geosciences — including geology, mineralogy, hydrology (the scientific study of water on the planet's surface) and the environment — along with physics, chemistry, mathematics and information technology.

Because seismology education and research requires access to data from seismic stations across continents and oceans, its study is a natural mechanism for promoting scientific collaboration. Seismic data collection can also be integrated into an educational program.

"I argued that if you are going to train Africans in Africa at the master of science and Ph.D level — train them so they can compete in the global work force — then you need the research infrastructure to support it," Nyblade said. "That brought in the idea of a seismic network."

Seismic activity in Africa is associated mainly with the northern part of the continent bordering the Mediterranean, the Gulf of Aden and the East Africa Rift System. Southern Africa has some tectonic activity but its history is incomplete, according to the Council for Geoscience.

A growing seismic network will allow African students to do original research and will lead to significant interest and participation in African science by researchers around the world.

Scientists in a research setting "have to generate new data sets," Nyblade said. "One good way to do that is to have a network and use it

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United States Withdraws Support for Zimbabwe Power-Sharing Pact

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States no longer supports the September 15 power-sharing agreement between Zimbabwe's government, led by Robert Mugabe, and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party, the State Department's top envoy to Africa said, adding that Mugabe is incapable of sharing power.

Assistant Secretary Frazer says the United States does not see power sharing in Zimbabwe as being successful if Mugabe stays in power.

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer spoke in South Africa December 21 after consulting with regional leaders about Zimbabwe's continued economic and political chaos and the country's cholera epidemic, which has now claimed more than 1,120 lives.

Speaking to Agence France-Presse (AFP), Frazer said: "We have lost confidence in the power-sharing deal being a success with Mugabe in power. He has lost touch with reality."

The agreement, brokered by former South African president Thabo Mbeki, was supposed to result in a coalition government between Mugabe and the MDC, with opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai serving as prime minister. However, talks broke down over the government's refusal to grant the political opposition control over key ministries.
On March 29, Zimbabwe held presidential and parliamentary elections. Despite violence, intimidation and a media environment that heavily favored Mugabe's ruling party, the MDC gained a majority in the country's parliament and Tsvangirai won more presidential votes than Mugabe or third-party challenger Simba Makoni.

However, according to official election results, Tsvangirai failed to receive more than 50 percent of the vote and a presidential runoff election was scheduled for June 27. In the weeks leading up to the runoff vote, a sustained campaign of violence and intimidation directed against the MDC prompted Tsvangirai to withdraw from the contest out of concern for the lives of his supporters. Mugabe then claimed victory in a vote widely condemned by the international community.

Frazer, based on her discussions in the region, said that Mugabe is "completely discredited" and southern African leaders are discussing how to "facilitate a return to democracy without creating a backlash like a military coup or some sort of civil war."

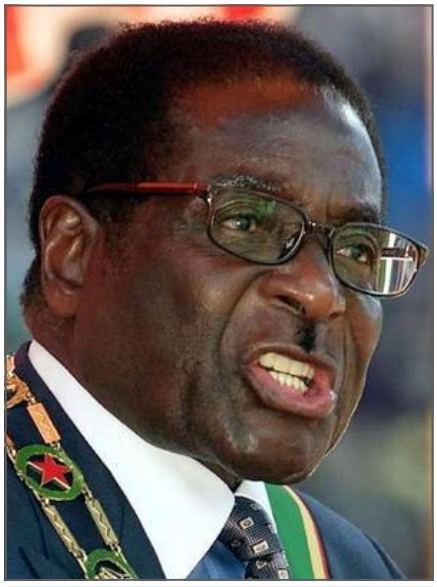
The United States intends to maintain its economic sanctions against Mugabe and other key members and associates of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) as long as Mugabe remains in power, she said.

"We were prepared to use American influence to negotiate with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to clear the $1.2 billion Zimbabwe debt, but now we are no longer prepared to do that," Frazer told AFP.

She added that the longer Mugabe maintains his grip, "the better the chances of him taking a seat next to Charles Taylor in The Hague," referring to the former Liberian president's trial at the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes.

SECRETARY RICE WEIGHS IN

In Washington, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice continued U.S. calls for international pressure on



Mugabe's claim that "Zimbabwe is mine" sums up the root of the country's problems, U.S. officials say.

Mugabe. Speaking on NBC's Meet the Press December 21, she said Zimbabwe's dire circumstances have prompted African states such as Botswana and Kenya to urge

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to catalyze research and education programs that pull together researchers and university professors from across the continent."

ACROSS THE CONTINENT

Since 2004, the AfricaArray program has raised about $3.5 million from the U.S. National Science Foundation and $1.5 million or more from the South African National Research Foundation.

Funding also comes from projects like one for the U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration, for which students help identify natural seismic events within a mining environment. Mining also can generate seismic signals.

Phase two began in January 2008 (and will run to 2010) to begin building centers of excellence in geophysics at other universities in Africa and to expand the seismic network in two ways.

"One is to expand its geographical scope," Nyblade said. "So far, we're focused on eastern and southern Africa, but in this phase we're trying to push into western Africa with the seismic stations. We're also trying to add to the seismic stations other sensor technology to transform the seismic network into a multidisciplinary network."

For example, adding Global Positioning System — a U.S.-built satellite navigation system — equipment to the network would allow the stations to be used for atmospheric science, including space weather applications. The GPS sensors would also allow the stations to study tectonic plate motions and for regional mapping of roads and boundaries.

Meteorological sensors would allow African researchers to do weather observations, so Nyblade is seeking funding for this application.

AND BEYOND

In phase two, the AfricaArray program will try to expand the number of seismic stations to 50, including 10 in West Africa, and will seek to expand the areas of geoscience to support research and training in groundwater hydrology, geochemistry and geology, as well as meteorology.

"We want to make this a pan-African network," Nyblade added, "so in phase three [2011–2013] we would push into north Africa with the network, so we'd cover the entire continent."

More information about AfricaArray (http://africaarray.psu.edu/) is available at the organization's Web site. ♦

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Mugabe to relinquish power.

"You've got a cholera epidemic there. You have humanitarian disaster in terms of food. You have the goons of the Mugabe regime going around and … detaining people and … frightening people, terrorizing people," Rice said. "The international community, in that circumstance, needs to act."

On December 19, Mugabe told reporters he was refusing to step down, saying, "Zimbabwe is mine."

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said December 19 that Mugabe's statement "sums up in a concise way what is at the root of Zimbabwe's problems," by showing Mugabe "thinks that the state of Zimbabwe and the people of Zimbabwe are there only to serve his interests."

"It should be the other way around. Those who govern should govern in the interest of the governed. The governed should be able to determine who governs them and in what manner," McCormack said.

Zimbabwe's people have been unable to freely express their views at the ballot box, McCormack said, recalling the country's June 27 sham presidential runoff, in which Mugabe ran unopposed.

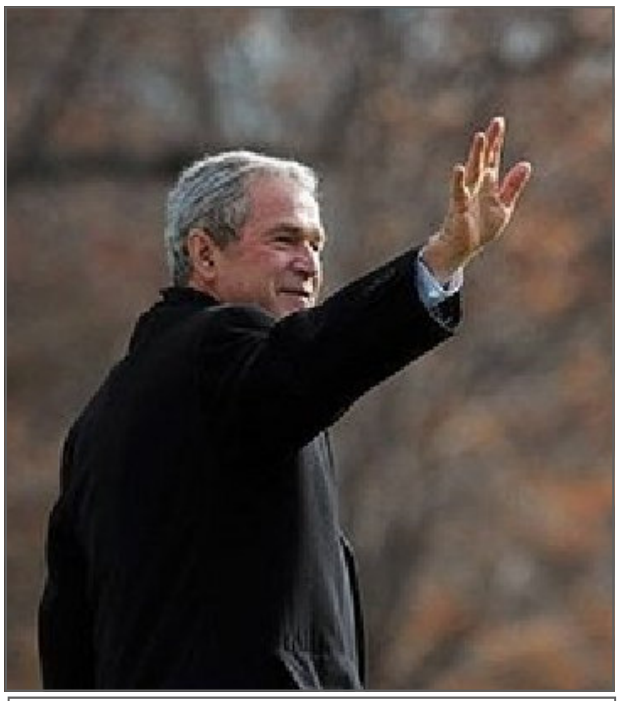
(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: http://www.america.gov) ♦

U.S. President Can Forgive Federal Crimes

By Michelle Austein Brooks
Staff Writer

Washington — President Bush granted 19 pardons and one commutation December 23, including a pardon of a man who died more than 20 years ago. But in what may be a presidential first, Bush rescinded one of those pardons a day later.

The U.S. Constitution gives the president the power to pardon, or forgive, people for their crimes. It also allows the president to issue commutations, or reductions in prison terms. Presidents can issue pardons at any time, but they are especially common in the last days of an executive's term.



President Bush pardoned 19 people on December 23.

Among those pardoned by President Bush were people convicted of mail fraud, providing false statements to government offices, trafficking counterfeit goods, embezzlement and illegal drug distribution.

In a rare posthumous pardon, Bush forgave Charles Winters, who was convicted in 1949 of violating the Neutrality Act by conspiring to export aircraft to a foreign country. Winters, an Irish Protestant from Boston, helped supply arms to Jews fighting for an independent Israeli state. Although he served 18 months in a U.S. prison, Winters was considered a hero in Israel. Two others were also convicted in the case and pardoned by previous presidents. Winters died in 1984.

White House press secretary Dana Perino said the president rescinded his pardon of Robert Toussie after learning Toussie's father had contributed more than $40,000 to the Republican Party. "The political contributions certainly were not known. It raises the appearance of impropriety, so the president prudently decided not to go through with the pardon," Perino said December 24.

Toussie had been convicted of mail fraud and giving false statements to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Perino said she was unaware of any other presidential pardons being rescinded; other White House officials said they are not certain if Bush is the first president to take this action. Some legal scholars have questioned in the U.S. media whether the Constitution grants the president the power to rescind a pardon.

So far, Bush has granted 190 pardons and nine commutations, less than half the number granted by Presidents Clinton and Reagan, the two most recent two-term presidents.

PRESIDENT'S AUTHORITY

There are a few limitations on the executive power to pardon. A president can pardon only those convicted of federal crimes and cannot interfere with a state's criminal or civil case. (Governors have the authority to pardon and commute sentences for those convicted of state law violations.) In addition, the president is prohibited from interfering with Congress' right to impeach an official.

Specifically, Article II, Section 2, Clause 1 of the Constitution states, "The President shall ... have power to grant reprieves and pardons for offences against the United States, except in cases of impeachment."

These restrictions are an example of the checks and balances that the framers of the Constitution incorporated to ensure that each branch of government has rights and no single branch has overarching authority.

An executive pardon can be issued at any time. Typically, pardons are issued while a person is serving or after serving a sentence, but pardons can be issued even before a person is charged with a crime.

President Ford famously pardoned his predecessor, Richard Nixon, for all offenses he "committed or may have committed or taken part in" related to the Watergate scandal, though he had not been charged with any crimes. That pardon fig-

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Obama Adds Republican Arab American to List of Cabinet Picks

By Michelle Austein Brooks
Staff Writer

Washington — President-elect Obama capped off a busy week of Cabinet announcements December 19 with four more picks. Among his most recent selections is an Arab-American Republican.

At a Chicago press conference, Obama said he intends to nominate Republican Representative Ray LaHood to be the next secretary of transportation.

LaHood, a congressman from Illinois who served on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, would be one of two Republicans in the Obama Cabinet, if confirmed by the Senate. The other is Robert Gates, President Bush's defense secretary, who will continue in that post in the next administration.

"When I began this appointment process, I said I was committed to finding the best person for the job, regardless of party," Obama said. "Ray's appointment reflects that bipartisan spirit — a spirit we need to reclaim in this country to make progress for the American people."

"I have often said that once the election is over we must put aside our partisan labels and work together for the good of the American people," LaHood said. "That is exactly the approach President-elect Obama will take as president and is exactly the approach I will take as secretary of transportation."

LaHood, who is the grandson of Lebanese immigrants, is one of a handful of Arab Americans currently serving in the U.S. Congress. Many Arab Americans also serve in state and local governments.

Illinois Representative Ray LaHood is the second Republican Obama has selected to serve in his Cabinet.

"Arab Americans are proud of Ray LaHood's service to our country. He is a measured and thoughtful voice on the Hill, someone who has never been afraid to reach across the aisle to find common ground. We salute President-elect Obama on a great pick for the Department of Transportation and for America," Arab American Institute President James Zogby said in a December 18 press statement.

Arab Americans have served in previous Cabinets. Former President George H.W. Bush appointed John H. Sununu to be White House chief of staff, a Cabinet-level post in that administration. The first Arab American to head a federal department was Donna Shalala, who served as President Clinton's secretary of health and human services. President George W. Bush had two Arab Americans in his first Cabinet: Office of Management and Budget Director Mitch Daniels and Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham.

OTHER CABINET ANNOUNCEMENTS

Obama also announced the names of three other people he has chosen to serve in his administration: California Representative Hilda Solis to head the Department of Labor, former Dallas Mayor Ron Kirk to be the next U.S. trade representative and Karen Mills to lead the Small Business Administration. All must be confirmed by the Senate.

Solis, who has served in Congress since 2000, previously served as a state senator, the first female Hispanic in the California Senate. The daughter of Mexican and Nicaraguan immigrants, she will be one of five females and three Hispanics in the Obama Cabinet if all are confirmed.

Since serving as mayor, U.S. Trade Representative-designate Kirk has worked as a lobbyist and a lawyer. Mills, picked to head the Small Business Administration, is an entrepreneur and venture capitalist and currently is president of a company in Maine.

With these announcements, Obama has completed his selections for heads of federal departments. The president-elect and his family plan to head to his birth-state of Hawaii to spend the Christmas holiday.

For more on Obama's Cabinet selections, see "The Future Cabinet (http://uspolitics.america.gov/uspolitics/elections/cabinet.html)."

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

Obama to Expand Volunteerism to Meet Global, Domestic Challenges

By Leah Dow
Staff Writer

Washington — President-elect Barack Obama says he wants to build on Americans' fundamental belief in volunteerism to address growing domestic and international economic difficulties.

A Peace Corps volunteer assists a student in a classroom in Guatemala.

Obama, both in speeches and on his Web site, has outlined a plan that would vastly increase programs that encourage Americans to engage in local volunteer community organizations both in the United States and abroad.

He calls for more than tripling to 250,000 slots the number of individuals in AmeriCorps, a domestic program where, among other tasks, volunteers help teachers and students in underserved schools and improve public health outreach. The president-elect also wants to double the size of the Peace Corps to 16,000 volunteers to work in other countries on a broad range of development projects, set goals for community service by middle school and secondary school students and provide college credit for hours of public service.

Obama further has suggested an America's Voice Initiative that would send Americans who are fluent speakers of local languages — teachers, engineers and doctors — to serve overseas in support of public diplomacy. "People of all ages, stations and skills will be asked to serve," Obama said in a speech during the presidential campaign. "Because when it comes to the challenges we face, the American people are not the problem — they are the answer."

About 26 percent of all Americans volunteer their services to help those less fortunate, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The president-elect has suggested that the U.S. system of volunteerism needs to be revamped to heighten civil engagement and utilize the range of skills that both U.S. youth and retired people can contribute. He has talked about creating an energy-focused youth jobs program to provide disadvantaged youth with service opportunities weatherizing buildings and getting practical job experience. And he wants to expand and improve programs that connect individuals over the age of 55 to quality volunteer opportunities.

An AmeriCorps volunteer works on a project with the Alaska-based Nenana AmeriCorps Tribal Civilian Community Corps program.

In developing his programs, Obama will have a rich well of experience into which to dip, as volunteerism has been part of the ethos of the American experience since nearly the beginning of the nation's history.

EDUCATION

In many U.S. schools, the concept of "giving back to the community" has been integrated into the curriculum. Volunteering is promoted not just among students, but also with teachers, professors and other school staff. It is not unusual to see an older student tutoring a younger student or a group of students meeting on a weekend to help clean up trash along a local stream.

Obama would like school systems to set a goal that all middle school and secondary school students do a minimum of 50 hours of community service a year. He also would like to see college work-study programs — where students are given a discount on their tuition for work done for the university — shift from jobs in dining halls and libraries to supporting public service projects.

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, studies have shown that students who are engaged in helping their community through volunteer efforts are more likely to continue to help with civic duties later in life and have a positive influence on social behavior, attitudes and habits.

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Nonprofit organizations are those that operate for the purpose of serving the public or mutual benefit other than the pursuit of profits for owners or investors. Nonprofits in America encompass many types of services and organizations and ad-

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ured prominently as a campaign issue in Ford's subsequent defeat by Jimmy Carter in the 1976 presidential campaign.

In rare cases, a president has issued a blanket pardon to an entire group, as President Carter did in 1977 when he pardoned those who avoided the military draft during the Vietnam War.

Because of the large number of people seeking a pardon or commutation, a president typically gets help from the Department of Justice in assessing these requests. The department's Office of the Pardon Attorney reviews formal petitions. It typically receives more than 100 a month. After investigating the cases, the pardon attorney presents the petitions and related material to the attorney general. The attorney general reviews the information before deciding whether to recommend a particular pardon to the president.

A presidential pardon does not require the review or recommendation of the Department of Justice. Toussie's case was not reviewed by the Department of Justice, but now will be as requested by the president when he rescinded the pardon. Some presidents have bypassed the department's formal process to pardon people they knew personally.

More information on presidential pardons (http://www.usdoj.gov/pardon/) is available on the Web site of the Office of the Pardon Attorney.

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

Obama to Expand Volunteerism to Meet Global, Domestic Challenges . . .

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dress issues ranging from global poverty reduction and environmental cleanup to wildlife protection and help on HIV/AIDS challenges. According to the National Center for Charitable Services, there were more than 1.4 million nonprofit organizations in the United States as of 2006. The president-elect would like to create online networks where Americans can browse opportunities for service.

FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Volunteering through or for faith-based organizations is one of the most common ways of volunteering in America. These experiences can range from doing faith-based evangelical missions in remote villages overseas to serving at local "soup" kitchens that provide food for the homeless. Although some faith-based organizations incorporate religious teaching, many others simply focus on the mission of providing assistance and relief to targeted groups.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Corporate social responsibility, or CSR, is growing in popularity worldwide. CSR seeks to align a company's activities with the social, economic and environmental expectations of others, whether these are people actually invested in the company by owning stock or just the general public with which the company has an image. Increasingly, U.S. corporations are expecting their employees to engage in some level of volunteerism.

"Volunteering makes the heart grow stronger," said David Eisner, chief executive officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service. "More than 61 million Americans volunteer to improve conditions for people in need and to unselfishly give of themselves."

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

New Citizens Express Gratitude to and Pride in the United States

By Ralph Dannheisser
Special Correspondent

Washington — Newly installed U.S. citizens with roots scattered around the globe expressed common sentiments of pride and gratitude to America.gov shortly after taking their citizenship oath.

They were among 31 applicants from 23 nations randomly selected to be sworn in December 16 at a special ceremony in the rotunda of the National Archives, permanent home of America's founding documents. (See "Immigrants from 23 Nations Become Citizens at National Archives.")

Nabil Awad, a native of Mauritania who came to the United States 14 years ago to pursue his education, talked about his "great pleasure" in becoming a U.S. citizen.

"One of the great things that happened recently is the voting in the presidential election, and I thought I want to be part of that for the next election year," said Awad, who works as an auditor.

Saba Tasneem, who arrived from India as a student in 1998, agreed. "I want to be a part of the government here. I want to vote and get all the freedoms," she said. She also wants to bring over members of her family still in India, including her husband of two years. Tasneem studied accounting at Washington's Strayer University, and now works in that field. "I really feel very proud that I am a part of this country from today," Tasneem said.

Andre Bogoslowsky, 40, was granted political asylum by the United States in 1988 after having left the Soviet Union to study art in Spain. "Once I picked up some English," he recalled, "life was good, I was having shows, I had a green [permanent resident] card, and I didn't really care about becoming a citizen."

The Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom at the National Archives in Washington

But recently, he said, "I realized that I need to find myself. I need to commit myself to one country, one entity." He now sees his newly acquired citizenship in a country that provided him with "liberties and freedoms" as "one of the most important things in my life."

Khulud Khudur came to the United States from Sudan, with her parents and brother, when she was 8. Now an 18-year-old freshman at Pennsylvania State University, she is trying to decide between potential careers in law or medicine.

She said she decided to become a citizen when her secondary school civics teacher urged involvement in civic affairs, and she realized "becoming a citizen is a building block of doing so." After the oath, she and the new citizen from Ethiopia standing next to her shared an excited hug. "I'm a proud citizen now," Khudur said.

Dante Figueroa, who arrived about six years ago from Chile, offered two reasons for his decision to pursue U.S. citizenship: His wife is American, he said, and "the other reason is that I feel deeply attached to the very foundations of this country, the real qualities that make this country what it is."

Holding the ceremony flanked by the nation's founding documents — the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights — overwhelmed him with feeling "because of the values and ideals that are imbedded in these fantastic documents," he said.

As America.gov was interviewing Figueroa, a bystander broke in to ask him where he was from.

A broad smile lit up Figueroa's face.

"The United States," he told her. ♦

U.S. Working for "Sustainable and Durable" Cease-Fire in Gaza

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The end of the cease-fire between Hamas and Israel has led to days of violence in Israel and Gaza that has left more than 300 dead, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has been speaking with foreign leaders to try to end the fighting.

Rice has been "vigorously engaged," according to State Department acting deputy spokesman Gordon Duguid, who spoke with reporters in Washington on December 29. Since December 26, Rice has spoken to leaders in Israel, the United Nations, Russia, the European Union, France, the United Kingdom and Canada.

Smoke rises from a destroyed Hamas government building following an Israeli air strike in Gaza City, Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2008. The United States says the Palestinian Hamas organization broke the cease-fire, which has led to the violence.

Duguid said Rice's efforts have included five conversations with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, three with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit, and additional calls with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora and Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan.

"The United States is working actively to restore the cease-fire. The responsibility for violating the truce lies with Hamas. Hamas needs to stop its rocket attacks. And then we believe that the cease-fire can be restored, but it must be sustainable and durable. It also requires Hamas to stop its policies of confrontation and start becoming a part of the process," Duguid said.

The United States does not have direct contact with Hamas, which it has designated as a terrorist organization. "Other nations have other contacts they can use to help re-establish the cease-fire," Duguid said.

But he said Hamas "has the ability to join the process for peace" by taking steps such as renouncing violence and recognizing Israel's right to exist in peace and security, as called for under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1850.

"More to the point, we're working for a cease-fire now where Hamas must stop its rocket attacks on Israel. All sides then should respect a cease-fire, and work to build one that is sustainable and durable."

U.S. ASSESSING PALESTINIAN HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Duguid said the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is "urgently assessing" current Palestinian humanitarian needs, especially in terms of food and medical supplies. He said USAID delivers aid through partners in the region and is looking for ways to support the delivery of aid from the U.N. World Food Programme.

"For the past year ... the U.S. has been a major donor of humanitarian assistance to the West Bank and to Gaza through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East and the 2008 emergency appeal for the West Bank and Gaza Strip," he said.

During fiscal year 2008, which ended September 30, the Bush administration provided $57 million in humanitarian assistance that "helped support over 1 million Palestinian refugees in Gaza," he said, and has also given $14.34 million to the International Committee for the Red Cross for its operations to serve Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon.

White House deputy press secretary Gordon Johndroe expressed appreciation for all countries in the region that are working to alleviate humanitarian conditions in Gaza. "We ask all parties involved to allow

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United States Eager to Team with China to Deter Pirate Attacks

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
Staff Writer

Washington — Collaboration among countries can put a powerful check on criminal activity.

In attempting to stop piracy, such as recent efforts to stop a spate of attacks off the coast of East Africa, there is an important precedent to guide the international community.

In the Straits of Malacca several years ago, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand banded together to tackle piracy. At the time, the number of annual pirate attacks on commercial ships numbered as high as 48. There were fewer than 10 attacks in the past year.

Admiral Timothy Keating, who leads the U.S. Pacific Command, said these countries achieved results because they shared information and trained extensively together, "not just with the United States, but on a bilateral-multilateral basis."

He told reporters at the Foreign Press Center in Washington December 18 that some of the lessons learned by these Asian nations are transferable to East Africa, where another set of nations, including the United States, is focused on countering piracy in the Gulf of Aden.

Sixteen nations have been working on the problem off the coast of Somalia, and now China has decided to deploy navy ships to the region after several of its commercial ships were attacked. Keating's area of responsibility does not extend to the Horn of Africa, but his sister command — the U.S. Central Command — is operating there. He said the U.S. Navy will work closely with the Chinese when they arrive.

Keating said discussions are under way among the two commands and other government agencies, as well as the European Union and NATO, to ensure that the Chinese have the information needed to join the international effort to restore freedom of navigation. He expressed optimism that Chinese participation in naval patrols in the gulf "could be a springboard for [a] resumption of dialogue" between U.S. and Chinese military forces.

US Admiral Timothy Keating speaks on China's military build-up at a forum of the US-based Asia Society in Washington.

China severed U.S. military contacts after Washington announced a $6.5 million arms sale to Taiwan in October. The prospect of Chinese naval patrols off Africa in the Maritime Security Patrol Area that the U.S. Fifth Fleet established in the Gulf of Aden in 2008 eases the way for re-establishing bilateral military-to-military contacts. Keating said it "augurs well" for future cooperation.

There are differences in the political climate in the two geographic regions that will make it difficult to replicate the Asian success easily. In Asia, Keating said, pirates have had a tough time operating because the governments there — the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia — strictly adhere to rule of law. But in East Africa, there has been lawlessness that has given pirates a sort of haven onshore.

Kenya's foreign minister, Moses Wetangula, said pirates off the coast of East Africa have collected ransoms estimated at $150 million. The McClatchy Newspapers group reports the pirates have gone ashore in Somalia to spend the cash collected during more than 40 attacks in 2008. There must be political determination to deny pirates safe haven, Keating said.

Commercial ships that have been attacked off Africa have tried to repel the pirates in a variety of ways. Some ships have evaded pirate attacks by traveling exclusively at night. Captains have been advised by maritime security experts not to slow down when pirates try to board. U.N. official Antonio Maria Costa told Der Spiegel maga-

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Program Introduces Ordinary Americans to Human Rights Work

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — Teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, community leaders and activists are gaining practical experience in promoting human rights, either in the United States or abroad, thanks to a unique 10-week fellowship program offered by the University of Minnesota's Human Rights Center.

According to Kristi Rudelius-Palmer, co-director of the center, fellowship participants are required to take what they learn back to their communities, either through presentations to schools and civic groups or by volunteer work at local organizations. Fellowship participants, she told America.gov, find that their experiences at human rights organizations influence their lives and work.

"I think [former fellows] are using a lot of what they've learned in the work that they're doing, even if it may not be a traditional human rights advocacy job," Rudelius-Palmer said. "In reality, a lot of people have put into practice what they've been learning and are then able to use it in creative ways in their own work."

Human rights work can cut across many traditional occupations and encourages people "to go beyond their own comfort zones in learning to really think through how human rights can impact the work that they're doing and their purpose in life," she said.

Some find the experience a catalyst for changing careers, according to Rudelius-Palmer and center co-director David Weissbrodt, both fellowship alumni.

"Both of us were involved in human rights fellowships when we got started, and so we've seen from a firsthand basis that it definitely can make changes and has in our own lives," Rudelius-Palmer said.

WORK ROOTED IN COMMITMENT AND PASSION

Since its founding in 1989, the Human Rights Center has sponsored more than 380 fellows to work with human rights organizations in more than 70 countries.

Participants focus on a variety of issues: refugees and displaced individuals, women's rights, prevention of torture, indigenous peoples' rights, the rights of children and documentation of human rights violations.

Fellows in the 2009 program work with groups including the Community Aid Network-Uganda; the Center for Public Interest Law in Accra, Ghana; the Minneapolis-based Center for Victims of Torture; Green Empowerment/AsoFenix in Managua, Nicaragua; and Human Rights Watch in New York.

The center awards grants ranging from $1,000 to $4,500 to help pay for transportation, lodging and food. Because the grants are insufficient to finance the entire cost of the fellowship, applicants are encouraged to apply to other sources for additional support.

Some fellows, Rudelius-Palmer said, spend their own money to complete their fellowships.

"It's not a job; it's really showing their commitment and their passion," she said. "If people are used to living on higher means, this probably isn't going to be the fellowship for them."

Kristi Rudelius-Palmer

People with full-time paying jobs must arrange for time off. "We found that teachers have great potential for these fellowships if they do have summers off because they are able to go out in the field and they can bring back what they've learned directly into their classrooms and be energized as well," Rudelius-Palmer said. Others, she said, "have to sacrifice."

"Most recently, a trend that I've noted is that we have more immigrants applying for these fellowships," Rudelius-Palmer said. "Some of it is to go back to their home

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Program Introduces Ordinary Americans to Human Rights Work . . .

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countries that they've either been refugees from or are in rather difficult situations. They really want to be trying to give back to their communities — or at least the regions of their origin."

Even with the financial constraints, the center has more applicants than it can fund, Rudelius-Palmer said. "We're constantly trying to find creative ways to build an endowment for the fellowship so we can fund even more applicants."

Lucy Arimond, an attorney, educator and longtime activist with extensive experience in pastoral ministry, recently became director of the Human Rights Center's fellowship programs.

"The need for this sort of volunteer labor in human rights organizations is so enormous, and the pool of people interested in engaging it is so broad, that the only real issue is finding the grant money," she told America. gov. "If we had the money and the staffing, we could multiply this program a million times over and not begin to meet the need."

Funding, Arimond acknowledged, is especially difficult to secure in the current global financial crisis.

In these times, human rights fellowships might seem like a luxury, she said, but she urged a focus on the long-term effect of these efforts.

"These are the kinds of programs that build hope. These are the kinds of programs that build networks of friendship that can keep our world from blowing itself to pieces," Arimond said.

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U.S. Working for "Sustainable and Durable" Cease-Fire in Gaza . . .

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food and medical supplies to reach the people there," he told reporters December 29 in Crawford, Texas, where President Bush is spending the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Johndroe said Bush administration officials have urged Israel to avoid civilian casualties, but he said the United States "understands that Israel needs to take actions to defend itself," and "Hamas, as we've seen in the past, seems to base its people and some of its rockets in civilian areas."

On December 19, Hamas refused to renew the six-month cease-fire which had been brokered by Egypt, and Johndroe said "hundreds of rockets ... have fallen on southern Israel in the last few days."

"Hamas has once again shown its true colors as a terrorist organization that refused to even recognize Israel's right to exist," he said.

Johndroe said Israel has said both publicly in the press and in private conversations that it does not want to retake the Gaza Strip, from which it unilaterally withdrew its military forces and settlements in 2005.

He also said President Bush spoke with Jordan's King Abdullah earlier December 29 and with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia December 27 to discuss the crisis and to urge that "the violence stop ... in a way that leads to a durable and sustainable cessation of violence."

President-elect Barack Obama has also been monitoring the situation and has been kept informed thanks to Secretary Rice, according to his senior advisor, David Axelrod, who spoke on the CBS television network's Face the Nation program December 28.

"I think he wants to get a handle on the situation so that when he becomes president on January 20th, he has the advantage of all the facts and information leading up to that point," Axelrod said. But, he added, "there's only one president who can speak for America at a time, and that president now is George Bush."

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

Mark Felt, Watergate's Famed Anonymous Source, Dies at Age 95

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Mark Felt, better known as the anonymous source "Deep Throat," who dragged into the spotlight the Watergate scandal that drove President Nixon from office in 1974, set a legendary example of how American investigative journalists work with confidential sources.

Felt died December 18 in Santa Rosa, California, approximately three years after he revealed that he had been the primary source for the information Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein used to expose the Nixon administration's complicity in the coverup of illegal surveillance of the Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate Hotel in 1972.

Felt, a deputy director of the FBI, gave Woodward information in secret meetings at an underground parking garage in Virginia. Woodward later said Felt had been motivated by his conscience to act as a whistle-blower — an insider ethically compelled to reveal information about illegal activities.

"In a sense, every bone in his body told him play by the rules. But he realized that everyone else was breaking the rules, and so he was willing to guide us and talk," Woodward told CBS News December 19.

The Wall Street Journal's Gerald Seib said the cooperation between Felt and Woodward, immortalized by the book All the President's Men and a film of the same title, fundamentally changed the relationship between journalists and their political sources.

Former FBI official W. Mark Felt, 91, with daughter Joan, appears at a news conference yesterday at their home in Santa Rosa, Calif. (AP photo / May 31, 2005

"It created the use of anonymous sources in a way that's been practiced for the last generation. It also, I think, created an environment in which there was a gap between journalists and sources," Seib said in a December 19 online video.

"I think journalists and sources, politicians in Washington, were much closer. They fraternized more in the days before Watergate. I think Watergate sort of was a cautionary tale to those in journalism that you can't get too close to sources that you might have to get tough with down the line," he said.

In the case of Woodward and his colleagues at the Post, Felt's identity was protected for more than 30 years until the former FBI official chose to reveal himself in 2005. As Woodward wrote in his book The Secret Man, published after the revelation: "It is critical that confidential sources feel they would be protected for life. There needed to be a model out there where people could come forward or speak when contacted, knowing they would be protected. It was a matter of my work, a matter of honor."

Ironically, also in 2005, New York Times journalist Judith Miller served 85 days in jail for her refusal to reveal that former vice presidential staffer Lewis "Scooter" Libby had been her confidential source of Valerie Plame's identity as a CIA agent in the so-called "Plame-gate" scandal.

LESSONS OF WATERGATE IN THE AGE OF NEW MEDIA

Looking back at Felt's willingness to take great personal risks to work with journalists to expose a scandal, former Washington Post Executive Editor Leonard Downie Jr. dis-

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION
AMERICAN EMBASSY

P.O.Box 1014
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Phone: 251-11-5174007
251-11-5174000
Fax: 251-11-1242454
Email: pasaddis@state.gov

See also

http://www.america.gov/
Telling America's story

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cussed in a December 21 commentary whether reporters could repeat investigative journalism on the scale of Woodward and Bernstein's Watergate reporting in the new era of blogs and the Internet.

Although the current near-instantaneous nature of news reporting would make it difficult to maintain a prolonged relationship between the reporter and the source, Downie says that anonymous sources remain an important and crucial element in the press's role as a watchdog on the government.

"Numerous confidential government and other insider sources have helped Washington Post reporters with investigative stories in recent years, about everything from the CIA's secret interrogation sites for terrorist suspects to mismanagement at [Washington's] Smithsonian Institution," he wrote.

But just as Woodward and Bernstein had to seek out and cultivate Mark Felt as a source, today's reporters must work diligently to gain the trust of wary public officials who have much to lose, and who might be willing to provide only "snippets of information that must be pieced together over time from numerous sources for the most explosive stories," Downie said.

The full text of Downie's commentary (http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/19/AR2008121902928.html?hpid=topnews) is available on the Washington Post's Web site.

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United States Eager to Team with China to Deter Pirate Attacks . . .

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zine recently that regional cooperation, as carried out successfully in the Straits of Malacca, should be replicated in the Africa region. Costa, head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna, Austria, suggested countries like Tanzania, Djibouti and Kenya band together and sign agreements to arrest pirates and take them to their courts for prosecution.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said not all the African regional states have the requisite judicial and law enforcement capabilities to prosecute pirates successfully. She has said that the United Nations and other nations can help rectify this.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said members of the international community must work aggressively, under a United Nations Security Council resolution that passed in December, to deter piracy. Security Council Resolution 1851 authorizes all necessary means to thwart pirates, including the possibility of entering Somali territory or airspace.

Gates suggested looking at lessons learned through combined coalition operations organized to counter terrorism, drug trafficking and smuggling. In these cases, the operations benefited from shared intelligence and the development of standard maritime procedures.

During a December 13 speech in Bahrain, as part of the annual Manama Dialogue, Gates encouraged ship captains to sail only in recommended areas because prescribed sea lanes are more likely to have a nearby naval presence and there is greater safety in numbers. He also said shipping companies should consider employing security personnel to use nonlethal defensive measures against the pirates. In earlier incidents, some commercial crew members took to pelting marauders with tomatoes, but that has not proven a successful defense.

A State Department podcast on piracy (http://stream.state.gov/streamvol/libmedia/iraq/475/usinfoweek/ww_121208_63.mp3) (5.77 MB, streaming) is available on America.gov.

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