



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

Donald Y. Yamamoto Sworn in as United States Ambassador to Ethiopia



Ambassador Donald Yamamoto

Donald Yamamoto was sworn in as the U.S. Ambassador to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on November 9, 2006. He presented his credentials to Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in Addis Ababa on November 23, 2006. Prior to his appointment, he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of African Affairs from 2003 to 2006, where he was responsible for coordinating U.S. policy toward over 20

countries in east and central Africa. He served as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti from 2000 to 2003 and was the Deputy Director for East African Affairs from 1998 to 2000.

Ambassador Yamamoto entered the Foreign Service in 1980. Previous assignments include U.S. Embassy Beijing as staff aide to the Ambassador and Human Rights Officer during the Tiananmen Square demonstrations in 1989; Japan as Principal Officer of the Fukuoka Consulate; and Eritrea as Chargé d'Affaires at U.S. Embassy Asmara in the Horn of Africa. He attended the National War College in 1996 for senior training and received a Congressional Fellowship in 1991.

Ambassador Yamamoto is a graduate of Columbia College and received a Masters Degree in International Affairs from Columbia University. He has studied Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and French. During his Foreign Service career, he has received three individual Superior Honor awards and two group awards.

Donald Y. Yamamoto was born in Seattle, Washington and raised in New York City. He is married with two children. ♦

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Activists Worry About Darfur Violence Spreading Through Region

By Michelle Austein
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – The violence in Darfur, Sudan, is spreading to neighboring countries – Chad and the Central African Republic – according to award-winning actress and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Mia Farrow.

"The violence and devastation that is now defining Darfur has reached well across the border. In fact, the border is nonexistent," Farrow said at a press briefing in Washington November 21.

Farrow and David Rubenstein, the executive director of the Save Darfur Coalition, returned November 20 from Chad. There, they met with people in hospitals, displaced persons camps and those from looted and burned villages. They video-taped people's stories to show them in the United States.

Those who fled Darfur thought they would be safe in Chad, Rubenstein said. But in fact, incidents of torture, rape and burning of villages now also are occurring in Chad.

Farrow visited Darfur in 2004 and again in June 2006. The people she met in Chad had spent days on foot fleeing Darfur but found their attackers followed them into Eastern Chad, she said. "There is no safety for them now," Farrow added.

The only solution, Farrow said, is for a United Nations-backed peacekeeping force to be deployed to Darfur, Chad and the Central African Republic. "The people deserve protection," she said.

The coalition hopes that a peacekeeping plan agreed to by international leaders in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 16 will work. However, it is concerned because the Sudanese government has yet to accept the plan in its entirety.

The plan calls for an expanded peacekeeping force of 20,000, jointly run by the United Nations and African Union. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile->

easily mobile in what is a huge territory, Rossin said. The peacekeeping force also must be fully funded, have a strong unified command and be focused on civilian protection, Rossin said.

Rossin also encouraged Americans to be vocal about their concerns about Darfur and its neighboring regions. Pressure from citizens shapes priorities of policymakers, Rossin said.



Sudanese school girls welcome UNICEF Good Will Ambassador Mia Farrow during her visit to a school at the Greida refugee camp, south of the Darfur town of Nyala, Sudan Monday, June 12, 2006. (AP Images)

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The peacekeeping force must be credible, effective and able to protect those who have fled Darfur, said former U.S. Ambassador Lawrence Rossin, who recently returned from a trip to Europe and Africa to meet with leaders about the situation. The force must be large and

The coalition representatives could not obtain visas to visit Darfur – a problem many humanitarian workers and media are facing because of government restrictions.

The Save Darfur Coalition is an alliance of more than 175 faith-based, advocacy and humanitarian organizations working to help the people of Darfur.

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U.S. ORGANIZATIONS DRAWING ATTENTION TO DARFUR

Many organizations across the United States are hosting events designed to encourage Americans to do what they can to help end the violence in Darfur. Many groups are holding fundraisers or hosting lectures to inform people about the crisis.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington is bringing attention to the crisis by projecting wall-sized images from Darfur on the outside of its building at night from November 20-26.

The images are being displayed to "alert the public to the urgency of stopping the human catastrophe in Darfur," said Fred Zeidman, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council chairman.

The exhibit calls attention in the United States and the world to the suffering of the civilian population in Darfur, said Andrew Natsios, U.S. presidential envoy to Sudan. Natsios spoke at the launch of the exhibit November 20.

The museum wants people to see the pictures so that they can articulate better what the situation in Darfur is like, Omer Ismail, a Darfu-



One of the photos displayed at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington

rian refugee, said at the exhibit launch. What the pictures cannot show, Ismail said, are the lives of people destroyed.

The images (<http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/analysis/details/2006-11-20/photos/>) are available on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Web site.

Other prominent performers and activists have spoken to U.S. and U.N. leaders about the situation in Darfur. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/>

display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=September&x=20060914184649A-JatiA0.1508142).)

For more information, see Darfur Humanitarian Emergency (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/darfur.html>).

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

Media Making Strides in Africa, Thanks to Technology, Training

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- On some indices of social and economic progress Africa may be slipping, but media on the continent are thriving with a combination of modern information technology and professional training from developed nations such as the United States.

As far as basic journalism is concerned, "things are looking up" on the continent, says Johnson Oshunkeye, a Nigerian journalist and general editor of the Lagos-based independent Daily Sun, whose career has spanned dictatorship to democracy and typewriters to digital technology.

"We are making slow but steady progress, Oshunkeye said in a USINFO interview November 22. The veteran journalist was on a three-day stop in Washington sponsored by the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

"I see an unusual commitment from African journalists now -- not only because the political atmosphere is better, but also because programs from the West and advances in technology have made us all want to do our best," Oshunkeye explained.

The African journalist described a media environment in Nigeria light years ahead of what it had been under General Sani Abacha's "brutal tyranny." The dictator Abacha ruled from 1993 until his sudden death in 1998, orchestrating the deaths of a number of reporters and editors.

"The press is much freer and vibrant now because the political at-

mosphere is much saner" under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo, Oshunkeye added.

According to Professor Joe Campbell, a former Associated Press reporter who covered Africa for several years and now teaches journalism at American University: "Abacha was an unbelievably vile dictator. He had no tolerance for independent-minded journalism at all. He was nothing but dangerous, and for a time Nigeria was one of



A journalist with LeCalame newspaper, Nouakchott, Mauritania listens to translations of a U.S. State Dept. briefing.

the world's leading jailers of journalists. Since then the country has made great strides in news reporting."

Journalism in Africa is still "a tough road to travel," Campbell says.

"But there are encouraging signs in a number of places like Nigeria and South Africa, and an independent media is holding its own even in smaller nations like Benin."

Professionally, the media in Africa are also "evolving in the right direction, thanks to training programs like CNN's," Oshunkeye told USINFO.

Oshunkeye recently competed against 1,500 journalists from 43 African nations to win the prestig-

ious CNN MultiChoice African Journalist 2006 award. As part of the prize, he spent three weeks attending a professional development program for veteran journalists at CNN's headquarters in Atlanta.

The technology Oshunkeye was exposed to at CNN's Atlanta news operation was "awesome," he said. Digital newsgathering was "especially impressive because of the ease and speed [with which] stories and photos were being produced and even displayed on Web sites on the Internet," he said.

"I was also impressed with the effortless coordination I saw in the newsroom in Atlanta, where hundreds of people were working on different stories. The synergy created was like a band performing," he said.

U.S.-government-funded programs aimed at journalists are "also a valuable thing,"

Oshunkeye said. The journalist, whose stay in Washington was part of ECA's International Visitor Leadership Program, said, "On a personal level, I've been able to pick up some valuable lessons that I believe will enhance my work when I get back."

During the program, Oshunkeye attended ECA-sponsored workshops that helped him craft stories that were succinct and more "reader-friendly" than the more "wordy" writing he had been used to in Africa.

ECA also arranged for Oshunkeye to meet with noted journalist Helen Thomas, who was for many years the White House correspondent and bureau chief for United Press Inter-

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Fulbright Science and Technology Award Winners Announced

By Jeffrey Thomas
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Students from 27 countries have been named as recipients of a new science and technology scholarship for doctorate degree study at leading U.S. universities, Under Secretary of State Karen Hughes announced November 21.

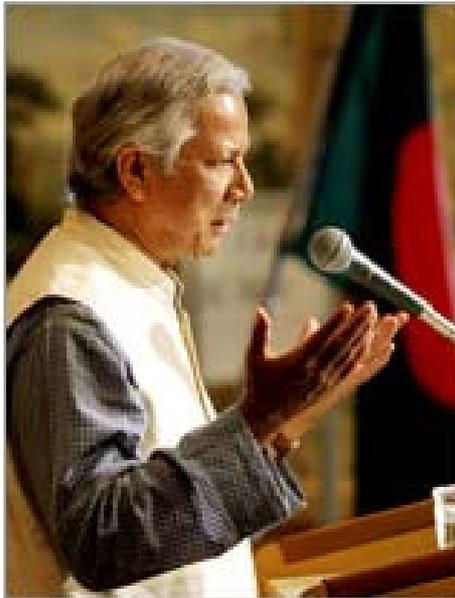
The announcement of the prestigious Fulbright awards following on the first U.S. higher education delegation trip to East Asia and the news that the United States has reversed a post-September 11 drop in student visa demand, "underscores our message that the U.S. government and higher education system welcome talented international students," a State Department spokesman said.

Hughes announced the creation of the new award program in January at the University Presidents Summit on International Education, which Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings co-hosted. Rice outlined her vision of a more active role for the U.S. government in its collaboration with the nongovernmental sector in promoting American higher education internationally. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Archive/2006/Jan/06-238004.html>).)

"We want to open minds, to foster debate and dialogue, to encourage the pursuit of knowledge," Hughes said at the summit.

Forty-four percent of the winners of the new Fulbright scholarship are women.

The 2006 recipients come from Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Nepal, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, South Korea, St. Lucia, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda and Venezuela.



Muhammad Yunus from Bangladesh became the 35th Fulbright alumnus to win a Nobel Prize. (AP Images)

Rice recently called the Fulbright Program, which celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2006, the "flagship international exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government."

The Fulbright Program awards about 6,000 grants annually to students and scholars from more than 150 countries. During the 60 years of its existence, the program has awarded grants to more than 275,000 individuals – three-fifths of them non-Americans – to study, teach and conduct research.

In the words of the late U.S. Senator J. William Fulbright, the program he authored "aims to bring a little more knowledge, a little more reason and a little more compassion into world affairs and thereby to increase the chance that nations will learn at last to live in peace and friendship."

This year Muhammad Yunus from Bangladesh became the 35th Fulbright alumnus to win a Nobel Prize. Yunus, who credited his year as a Fulbright graduate student in economics at Vanderbilt University in 1965-1966 for expanding his sense of possibilities, won the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for pioneering and championing the practice of micro-credit and microfinance to create opportunities for the poor.

Former Fulbright recipients include 65 winners of the Pulitzer Prize, which is awarded for achievement in print journalism, literary works and music.

Unlike most Fulbright scholarships, which are awarded through bilateral programs between the United States and a specific country, the new science and technology scholarships are awarded through a single worldwide competition.

According to the State Department, recipients of the new science and technology awards were chosen "through a rigorous, multi-tiered, merit-based selection process consisting of in-country competition and review, field and discipline merit review by top-level U.S. academic leaders, and nomination by a blue ribbon advisory panel, including a Nobel Laureate and university deans and presidents." Final selection was made by the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. ♦

Refugees Find a Welcoming Home in Virginia

By Jane Morse
USINFO Staff Writer

Charlottesville, Virginia -- Najeeba Siddiqe is a tiny woman, but her small size belies her strength and indomitable courage.

An Afghan refugee living in the small city of Charlottesville, Virginia, Siddiqe struggles to learn English while working as a housekeeper and caring for her two severely handicapped children.

Her life would seem difficult to many Americans, but with a warm smile she will tell you (through an interpreter) in all sincerity: "I live like a queen now."

Siddiqe is among some 800 refugees from 20 different countries to have settled in this city tucked in the foothills of the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains. The refugees have survived war and persecution because of their religion, race, nationality or political opinions.

The United States is the world's leading resettlement country, having accepted more than 2.6 million refugees since 1975. Ellen Sauerbrey, assistant secretary for the State Department's Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration (PRM), said on a recent visit with Charlottesville's refugees that what makes the U.S. resettlement program unique is the emphasis on integration into American society via employment.

By the time the refugees reach the United States, their most obvious physical injuries have been treated. What remains is the challenge of healing from psychological trauma and adjusting to a new country by getting a job and becoming self-sufficient.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS FACILITATE ASSIMILATION

When Siddiqe's husband was killed and her two handicapped children were injured in a rocket attack in Afghanistan, she took her family to Pakistan. There she found she was unable to find schooling or medical help for her son and daughter, both



Ellen Sauerbrey Assistant Secretary for the State Department's Bureau of PRM

of whom have multiple sclerosis, are unable to walk and have cognitive deficiencies.

But Siddiqe's luck improved when she was accepted by the United States as a refugee and brought to Charlottesville. There she came under the care of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a non-profit, nonsectarian voluntary organization partly underwritten with federal government funding.

Originally founded in 1933, the IRC has operations in more than 25 countries. In the United States, where the IRC has 17 offices

across the country, it annually helps as many as 10,000 refugees who have been offered asylum by the U.S. Department of State.

The IRC is one of 10 major resettlement agencies that partially are funded by federal government monies and that together have 370 affiliates around the United States. According to Sauerbrey, the most successful refugee placements are in smaller cities like Charlottesville, where housing is less costly and there are many small employers that can absorb entry-level workers.

The State Department's PRM Bureau funds the initial resettlement costs for each refugee for the first 120 days of their stay in the United States. After 120 days, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services pays for a variety of services, including medical assistance, skills training and social adjustment and aid for victims of torture.

In 1998, the IRC began resettling refugees in Charlottesville, a community of about 41,000 people. A tourist destination and home to the University of Virginia, Charlottesville enjoys low unemployment and many job opportunities.

David Brown, mayor of Charlottesville, said the city has become more diverse because of the new refugee residents. "There participation has improved the soccer teams in the area," he joked.

According to Sauerbrey, there is care taken in grouping refugees by ethnicity. "The United States does not want to create ethnic 'ghettos,'" Sauerbrey explained,

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Refugees Find a Welcoming Home in Virginia . . .

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“but we do try to settle people where they can have some small cultural attachments.”

Sauerbrey, emphasized, however, that the U.S. refugee program is a “needs-based” program.

“There is no political agenda, no ‘cherry picking,’” Sauerbrey said. “The United States takes the most needy and vulnerable.”

FINDING WORK IS FIRST STEP TO A BETTER LIFE

The Omni Hotel, a luxury hotel in the heart of historic Charlottesville, employs 50 refugees, full and part time, on its 135-member staff. Patty Shifflette, the human resources director for the hotel, says the hotel has been employing refugees for about nine years, and describes them as “fabulous.”

A number of the refugees on the hotel staff appreciate their entry-level jobs as stepping stones to a better life in the United States. For example, Joseph Sesay, who came to the United States two years ago from Sierra Leone, is a bellhop now, but he is working to complete his secondary-school education with the aim of eventually working as an electrician on heating and cooling systems.

Other refugees have gone on to open thriving businesses in Charlottesville. Bosnian refugee Dragana Katalina-Sun and her Chinese husband, Sun Da, run the busy Marco & Luca dumpling shop on the mall in the central part of the city. Meliha Mela Cosic and her sister Alma Zeljkovic, who escaped Bosnia-Herzegovina, now own and operate a hair salon. Croatian-Serbian

refugee Duska Burruss owns and operates a European foods and convenience store that attracts other refugees as well as local residents.

The process of assimilation into U.S. society begins when the IRC staff members meet refugee families at the local airport, transport them to modestly furnished homes, assist them with medical needs, enroll the children in schools and the adults in English classes, help them to obtain Social Security and state identification cards, and provide extensive orientation about life in their community.

The IRC has had success in placing refugees into jobs quickly despite language and cultural barriers. Within four months after arrival, nearly 100 percent of the refugees are economically self-sufficient, according to Monte Hackney, employment coordinator for the IRC’s Charlottesville office.

Siddiqe, for example, laughs that her coworkers are learning Farsi from her more quickly than she is learning English from them. With only three years of formal schooling, she has her own learning challenges. Nonetheless, Siddiqe has been a productive worker in house-keeping services at the University of Virginia, according to her case workers at the IRC.

Refugees who received better educations in their home countries typically are placed in entry-level jobs until they can master the English language but then strive to move up to better jobs.

For example, Nada (last name withheld), her husband, son and daughter escaped persecution in Iraq under the regime of Saddam Hussein. Nada’s husband, a chemist in Iraq,

is now a cook at a local restaurant. According to Nada, her husband, rather than being disappointed with his new status, will tell you “cooking is chemistry” and he hopes one day to open his own restaurant.

Nada, who speaks English very well and was once a math and science teacher in Iraq, is finishing her degree in biotechnology and is seeking a job with the hospital in Charlottesville.

REFUGEES FIND NEW LIFE, NEW HOPE IN UNITED STATES

“The commitment of the United States to protecting and assisting refugees is deep and abiding,” says Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. “This commitment is part of our nation’s history and it goes to the very core of our values.”

President Bush has emphasized that the United States is both a lawful and welcoming society that honors the heritage of all who live within its borders. The United States, he has said, is “the great hope on the horizon, the open door to the future, a blessed and promised land.”

For Siddiqe, a poor Afghan widow who finally has found a welcoming, safe place to live, a means of self-support, and schooling and medical care for her two handicapped children, the United States is a place of rebirth.

“I feel like I gave birth to my children for a second time,” she said of her new life in the United States.

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

Counterfeiting Threat to U.S. Currency Low, Report Says

By Jaroslaw Anders
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Counterfeiting of U.S. currency remains low, and the U.S. dollar continues to be viewed as a highly reliable legal tender, according to a report published jointly by the U.S. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, the U.S. Secret Service and the Department of the Treasury.

"People all over the world look to American currency for safety and security," U.S. Treasurer Anna Escobedo Cabral said in a press release that accompanied the report issued in late October. "I am pleased to learn that while counterfeiters may try to undermine the integrity of our money, American vigilance has upheld its reliability."

The study attributes the success to intensive data gathering and law enforcement, regular redesigning of American banknotes and worldwide educational programs. As a result, only about one in 10,000 bills is counterfeited, the study says.

CURRENCY OF TRUST

Of the \$760 billion in circulation as of December 2005, some \$450 billion, or approximately 60 percent, was held abroad. International demand for U.S. currency and its near-universal acceptance as a form of payment is a direct result of its reliability and stability, the report points out. "U.S. dollars (USD) are often found in countries with volatile political and economic conditions," says the report, and usually remain in circulation long after the conditions become more settled.

Foreign-held dollars are used mostly to preserve value -- to hedge assets

against inflation of local currencies. They are also a popular means of exchange in cross-border trade when credit markets and financial institutions are underdeveloped or unreliable, and in informal, or

Counterfeiting technologies also are becoming cheaper and more available. Some criminals still use traditional offset printing, which can produce large volumes of counterfeit banknotes at a relatively low



U.S. Treasurer Anna Escobedo Cabral unveiled the first \$1 notes with the new Treasurer's signature on April 26, 2006 at the Treasury's Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington, DC.

"gray," sectors of economy. Due to their easy convertibility, they also are a currency of choice for international travelers.

Unfortunately, the same factors that make U.S. currency so popular also make it a prime counterfeiting target. Counterfeit dollar notes are easy to move around and "pass" into circulation in all parts of the world, and their manufacture presents a lucrative and often low-risk source of illegal profit, the report says. In some countries, there are few or no legal procedures in place to help detect and investigate counterfeiting schemes.

cost. These notes, however, are easily detectable by trained cashiers and other money handlers, the report says.

COUNTERFEITING HOT SPOTS

An increasingly popular counterfeiting technology is digital printing that uses computer scanners and high-resolution printers. A separate category comprises "supernotes" produced on professional money-printing presses that use technologies similar to those of the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing and are the top of the line. Despite their generally high quality, the study reports, they are regularly detected

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NATO Alliance “Continues to Deliver,” United States Says

By Vince Crawley
USINFO Staff Writer

Riga Latvia -- The United States achieved all of its major objectives at the NATO Riga Summit November 28-29, said senior U.S. officials, who described the heads-of-state meeting as “a vital moment” transforming the military alliance for the 21st century.

“A year ago we laid out a transformation agenda; we achieved all of the things that were on our agenda today,” a senior U.S. official said November 29. Senior administration officials spoke to reporters immediately after the Riga Summit on condition they not be identified.

All 26 heads of state -- including some who have been skeptical of NATO operations in the past -- strongly affirmed the importance of the alliance mission in Afghanistan, according to the officials.

In private high-level talks, an official said, “there was an agreement that we have the power to succeed, the will to succeed, and that we must succeed as an alliance on the Afghanistan mission; that this is important ... not only for the future of Afghanistan, but also for the future of the global war on terror and the future of the alliance -- the alliance credibility is on the line in Afghanistan.”

The Riga Summit Declaration -- a document agreed upon by the heads of state -- includes language discussing the importance of NATO’s role in the 21st century and the sweeping scope of the alliance’s global missions. NATO leaders have committed to further expanding the alliance by saying Albania, Croatia and Macedonia could be invited to join as

early as 2008, an expansion President Bush proposed the previous day when he spoke at Latvia University, where he insisted, “The door to NATO membership remains open.”

Alliance leaders also agreed with Bush about the importance of continuing to support the membership

fense, but the average NATO nation spends just 2 percent. The declaration read, in part, “We encourage nations whose defense spending is declining to halt that decline and to aim to increase defense spending in real terms.” The language is non-binding, but U.S. officials said the words are significant because heads of state collectively agreed to them.



Leaders of the NATO member countries pose for a group photo at the NATO summit in Riga, Latvia, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2006.

for Georgia and Ukraine as both countries continue to undertake political reform.

In other discussions, alliance leaders frequently mentioned the importance of “values,” a word that also is used repeatedly in the Summit Declaration, U.S. officials said.

“Look at the number of times we use the word ‘values,’” one official said, indicating the opening paragraphs of the Summit Declaration. “‘Defensive values,’ ‘defense of our security and values.’”

The declaration also includes some of the strongest language yet on the issue of defense spending among member countries. The United States spends 3.7 percent of its gross domestic product on de-

The United States sought and achieved a Middle East training initiative. “That was a big thing on our list,” one U.S. official said, “to further what the alliance has been doing in training, increasing the capability of partners that we might interact with in the future.”

Declaring the NATO Response Force fully operational was another “big achievement,” a U.S. official said.

In addition, NATO adopted a seven-page Comprehensive Political Guidance, which is comparable to the U.S. Defense Department’s Quadrennial Defense Review, a strategic document that outlines long-term military funding and force structure

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Bush Blames Iraq's Sectarian Violence on al-Qaida

By David Shelby
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- President Bush acknowledges that al-Qaida militants sparked a period of sectarian violence in Iraq with the February bombing of the Shiite Askariyya Mosque in Samarra, and says he looks forward to his meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to discuss strategies for overcoming the violence.

"The Samarra bombing that took place last winter was intended to create sectarian violence, and it has," Bush told reporters during a November 28 press availability in Tallinn, Estonia. He said fomenting sectarian violence was the goal of the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was al-Qaida's leader in Iraq. The November 23 attacks that left more than 200 people dead in heavily Shiite Sadr City were "part of a pattern that has been going on for about nine months."

Bush said he would raise this issue with al-Maliki when he meets with the Iraqi prime minister in Amman, Jordan, November 29 and 30.

"My questions to him will be: What do we need to do to succeed? What

is your strategy in dealing with the sectarian violence? I will assure him that we will continue to pursue al-Qaida to make sure that they do not establish a safe haven in Iraq," he said.

Bush said the violence in Iraq is reflective of a larger trend in the Middle East where al-Qaida and other extremists work to undermine emerging democracies "because a democracy will be a major defeat for those who articulate extremist points of view." He pointed to Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories as other places where extremists are using violence to resist the growth of democracy.

The president said it is the responsibility of al-Maliki's government to confront the sectarian violence, but the United States stands prepared to help. "By far, the vast majority of the [Iraqi] people want to live in peace," he said. "Twelve million people voted. They said, 'We want to live under a constitution which we approved.' And our objective must be to help them realize their dreams."

Bush dismissed the idea that the United States might engage in direct talks with Iran over the situa-

tion in Iraq or any other issue before Iran verifiably suspends its uranium enrichment program. "Iran knows how to get to the table with us," he said, "... and that is [to] verifiably suspend the enrichment program. And then we'll be happy to have a dialogue with them."

The United States believes Iran's enrichment program, which is currently the subject of a sanctions resolution at the U.N. Security Council, is aimed at developing nuclear weapons.

However, the president welcomed Iraq's discussions with Tehran, saying, "Iraq is a sovereign nation which is conducting its own foreign policy. They're having talks with their neighbors. And if that's what they think they ought to do, that's fine. I hope their talks yield results."

The United States has accused Iran of supporting violence in Iraq and working to undermine the Iraqi government.

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

NATO Alliance "Continues to Deliver," United States Says . . .

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priorities. The document focuses on a key U.S. goal of making NATO "a more deployable, interoperable organization," a senior official said.

The agreement to offer Partnership for Peace status to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia is "a step forward, we believe, in strengthening security in the Balkans region, and improving the

Euro-Atlantic integration of those countries," a U.S. official said.

Finally, the United States sought and achieved stronger commitments to flexible global partnerships with nations such as Australia, New Zealand and South Korea that are not geographically linked to NATO but nonetheless participate meaningfully in global missions.

For more information on U.S. policy, see The United States and NATO (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/nato.html).

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

U.S. Welcomes U.N. Call for Improved Human Rights in Four Nations

By Ralph Dannheisser
USINFO Special Correspondent

Washington -- The State Department welcomes passage by the United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee of draft resolutions calling on the governments of Burma, Belarus, Iran and North Korea to end human rights violations.

A statement issued November 24 by Tom Casey, the department's deputy spokesman, also expressed disappointment that a similar U.S.-sponsored resolution on Uzbekistan was narrowly blocked by a "no-action" motion that effectively cut off debate in that case.

The Third Committee, which deals with social, economic and cultural issues, adopted its draft resolutions criticizing the human rights situation in Burma and Belarus on November 22.

The draft regarding Burma "would have the Assembly express grave concerns at ongoing systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Myanmar; the continuing use of torture; deaths in custody; political arrests and continuing imprisonment and other detentions, denial of freedom of assembly, association, expression and movement, and the prevailing culture of impunity," according to a U.N. press release.

The draft was adopted by a vote of 79 in favor to 28 against, with 63 abstentions.

BELARUS

The draft on the situation in Belarus listed a range of human rights violations, including failure to hold free and fair elections, and expressed concern about "continued reports of

harassment, arbitrary arrest and detentions of up to 1,000 persons, including opposition candidates, before and after the 19 March 2006 election, as well as the continued and expanding criminal prosecutions, lack of due process and closed political trials of leading opposition figures and human rights defenders," the U.N. press release said.

It also cited "the continued harassment and detention of Belarusian journalists covering local opposition demonstrations" and actions against "non-governmental organizations, national minority organizations, independent media outlets, religious groups, opposition political parties and independent trade unions and youth and student organizations."

That draft was adopted by a vote of 70-31, with 67 abstentions.

IRAN

The committee approved the draft resolution on Iran on November 21.

Passed by a vote of 70-48, with 55 abstentions, it would have the General Assembly express "serious concern at the continuing harassment, intimidation and persecution of human rights defenders, political opponents, ethnic and religious minorities and other groups in Iran, as well as the country's persistent failure to comply fully with international standards in the administration of justice," according to the release.

NORTH KOREA

The draft resolution on North Korea was approved November 17, by a 91-21 vote, with 60 members abstaining.

Expressing "very serious concern" at "continuing reports of systematic, widespread and grave violations of human rights" in North Korea, it would have the General Assembly urge that country's government to respect fully all human rights and fundamental freedoms and to grant full, free and unimpeded access to the U.N.'s Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation there.

The State Department statement called on the governments of Burma, Belarus, Iran, North Korea -- and of Uzbekistan -- "to respect the human rights of all their citizens and to release all those unjustly imprisoned for trying to exercise their most basic civil liberties.

"The peoples of each of these countries deserve to live without fear of government repression, and be integrated into the community of free and open nations," the department spokesman said.

The full text (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/76839.htm>) of Casey's statement is available on the State Department Web site.

For more information on U.S. policies, see Press Freedom (http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/rule_of_law/press_freedom.html), U.S. Support for Democracy in Burma (http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/east_asia_pacific/burma.html) and The U.S. and the Korean Peninsula (http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/east_asia_pacific/north_korea.html).

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United States Welcomes Israeli Leader's Peace Overture

By Stephen Kaufman
USINFO Staff Writer

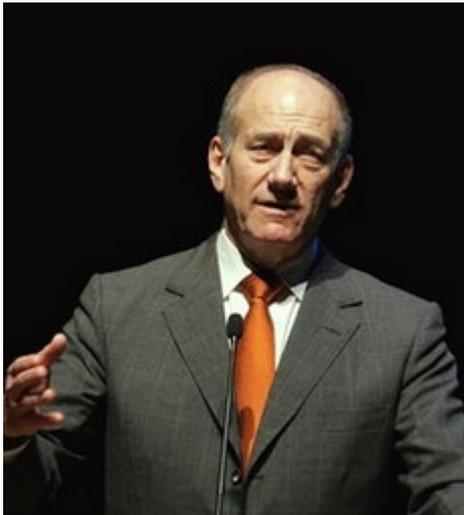
Washington -- The Bush administration says Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's offer to revive peace efforts with the Palestinians, in combination with the recent cease-fire announcement in Gaza, holds promise.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said November 27 that Olmert's remarks "offered up a political horizon to the Palestinians to negotiate in good faith."

Earlier in the day, the Israeli leader offered humanitarian and economic incentives conditioned on the cessation of violence and the release of Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit, who was kidnapped in June.

Olmert's offer is consistent with demands by the international community that Hamas renounce terrorism and recognize Israel's right to exist for the Palestinian Authority to receive additional international aid. However, Hamas has yet to agree to those demands, and the United Nations withdrew from a tentative agreement it made with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas that established guidelines for a Palestinian unity government after Abbas told the U.N. General Assembly September 22 that the incoming unity government would meet the international community's requirements. (See related article ([english&y=2006&m=October&x=20061027145733esnam-fuak0.1583216 \).\)](http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

McCormack said Shalit's continued captivity, as well as Palestinian rejectionist groups and the Hamas-led



*Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert
(AP Photo/Ariel Schalit)*

Palestinian government's failure to meet international conditions for political dialogue present "obstacles that need to be overcome."

However, he said unconfirmed reports that has deployed 13,000 security forces to northern Gaza to enforce the cease-fire "would be a very positive development."

"We hope that those security forces, as they get in place, would stop ... rocket attacks or any terrorist attacks that might be emanating from Gaza," he said.

The United States has been working with Abbas to strengthen the security forces under his control, believing that "a robust, professional, disciplined Palestinian security force" will play an important part in overcoming obstacles such as those presented by rejectionist groups.

U.S. officials also have "done what we can" to help both parties "think about and work through the various obstacles" in order to resolve their differences through dialogue instead of violence.

A senior State Department official said it is "entirely possible" that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will meet separately with Olmert and Abbas, possibly November 30, during her trip to the region.

For more information on U.S. policy, see *The Middle East: A Vision for the Future* (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/me_vision.html).

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New Training Programs Will Help Fight Trafficking in Persons

By Wendy Lubetkin
USINFO Special Correspondent

Geneva -- A unique new tool designed to fight trafficking in persons around the world is being officially launched this week by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the U.S. Department of State.

The new package of training programs aimed at immigration and law enforcement officials, legislators and nongovernmental organizations represents a "milestone in establishing a comprehensive global counter-trafficking strategy," said IOM spokesperson Jean-Philippe Chauzy. The training modules were developed by IOM, with funding from the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, and based on extensive experience in the field and feedback from participants in IOM pilot programs in Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America.

"The people of the United States view human trafficking as an abhorrent crime, and we are committed to combating and preventing it both at home and abroad," Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration Ellen Sauerbrey said at a joint press conference with IOM and other officials in Geneva November 28. "This is 21st century slavery."

The United States is a "world leader in the fight against trafficking in persons," having contributed over \$375 million over the past five years for counter-trafficking projects around the globe, she added. "The Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration has chosen IOM as our primary implementing partner for anti-trafficking programs because of



IOM has begun implementing a program to free and return home hundreds of trafficked children such as these boys. Photo: IOM/Jean-Philippe Chauzy

IOM's extensive expertise in the field."

Richard Danziger, Head of IOM's Counter-Trafficking Division, explained that one of the most basic challenges is training people to recognize trafficking victims. Confusion between smuggling, illegal immigration and trafficking persists. "Today, despite all the talk about trafficking, trafficked children are still being deported to their home countries, or even transit countries. Victims, slaves, are still being treated as criminals."

The first aim of IOM's new "Counter-Trafficking Training Modules" is to counter misinformation about trafficking in persons. The program seeks to debunk common myths, such as the idea that all victims of trafficking are women and children, or that only uneducated, poor people are trafficked.

IOM also strove to develop a methodology that would be international but flexible enough to be customized for specific local situations, Danziger said. "While trafficking is a global problem, trafficking is not the same in Afghanistan, as it is in Colombia or in Portugal."

To ensure this global approach, IOM drew on feedback from successful pilot programs in the Netherlands Antilles, Jamaica, South Africa, Indonesia, Cambodia, Suriname and the Bahamas. To date, some 700 people in 25 countries have been trained to use the modules.

Each module is designed as a stand-alone two-day training program. The first day might begin with a session on the basic concepts of trafficking in persons, including how to identify victims. Participants learn about the different ways trafficking works and the methods traffickers use to control their victims

(Continued on page 14)

Counterfeiting Threat to U.S. Currency Low, Report Says . . .

(Continued from page 8)

at the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank cash offices and in financial institutions worldwide.

The report says that despite the growing availability of counterfeiting technologies, a relatively small amount of counterfeit currency (about \$61 million) was passed on to the public worldwide in 2005. According to the study, the Latin America region and the region on Russia's southern border, as well as the countries of Colombia and North Korea, deserve special mention as sources of counterfeit U.S. currency.

In the last four years, Colombia topped the list of countries where

the largest amounts of counterfeit U.S. notes were seized. The study says that in Colombia, as in some other Latin American countries, criminal networks developed to manufacture and distribute narcotics also are ideally suited to deal in counterfeit currency.

The United States also is conducting a strategic investigation of the trafficking and production of supernotes first discovered in 1989 and traced to North Korea. U.S. law enforcement officials have determined that those highly deceptive notes are produced and distributed with the full consent and control of the North Korean government. (

A press release (<http://www.ustreas.gov/press/releases/>

hp154.htm) and the full text (http://www.ustreas.gov/press/releases/reports/the_use_and_counterfeiting_of_u.s_currency_abroad_part_3_september2006.pdf) (PDF, 100 pages) of the report are available on the Treasury Department's Web site.

For more information on U.S. policy, see Terrorist Financing (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/terrorist_financing.html).

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New Training Programs Will Help Fight Trafficking in Persons . . .

(Continued from page 13)

through debt bondage, isolation, the removal of ID or travel documents, or the use of violence and the threat of reprisals against family members.

Later, participants move on to identifying potential problems in their own countries and working in teams to prioritize potential initial strategies. A key focus is on building partnerships and developing cooperative networks between government, law enforcement and civil society. "In many countries, police, border guards, do not work with civil society -- there is no trust between those two institutions. These modules are intended to address just those issues," Danziger said.

"The counter-trafficking modules draw on IOM's extensive

experience in this field to develop a how-to approach for policy makers, service providers and others," said Kelly Ryan, deputy assistant secretary of state for population, refugees and migration. "Their focus is comprehensive, providing information and instructions on the essential elements of an effective national strategy to combat trafficking, such as information campaigns, return and reintegration of victims, cooperation and networking, special needs of children, and direct assistance among other topics."

Among the pilot countries that have been using the modules now for several years, is the Bahamas. "Whenever we recruit new immigration officers, we use part of the module for their training," said Vernon Burrows, director of the Immigration Department of the Bahamas.

As an example, Burrows noted that it is essential to sensitize immigration officials "to ask the right questions" when they encounter unaccompanied minors or children traveling with adults who are not their parents. "When you ask these questions, you may get answers where they reveal themselves," he explained.

Awareness of the problem of trafficking in persons has grown dramatically in recent years, Danziger said, and basic awareness is a big step toward addressing the issue. One simple example of progress, he noted, is the fact that many countries now place certain conditions on visas for children who are not traveling with their parents. "I think we will find soon that most if not all countries are doing more to protect unaccompanied minors." ♦

Education More Important than Ever, Expert Says

By Carolee Walker
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – In the war on terrorism, as well as in today’s job market, education is more important than ever, said education policy specialist Andrew Rotherham in a State Department webchat November 28. Today, all jobs require higher levels of education and a secondary-school degree is simply insufficient, he said.

“Like all countries, Americans realize that education is a key to individual and collective opportunity in a hypercompetitive globalized world,” Rotherham maintained. The college-preparatory curriculum is important for all kinds of post-secondary opportunities, and there is no downside to giving children a more rigorous secondary-school education, he said.

Although much needs to be done to fight the war on terrorism, children must become exposed to and learn about world religions and different cultures, he said. “Learning about religion need not involve proselytizing and it’s essential that students understand this important historical and current context,” Rotherham said.

“I’m not so naïve as to say that only greater understanding will resolve the problems, but it’s obviously a predicate.”

One of the strengths of the U.S. educational system is the country’s belief in universal access to public education and a growing commitment to a higher level of universal attainment, including computer-based learning through virtual education programs, Rotherham said. The U.S. educational system is decentralized and run by state and

local governments, and more than 90 percent of students in the United States attend public schools.

People chose private schools for different reasons, including religion, Rotherham said, and although some private schools do receive public money for certain activities, these schools are not state supported. A fundamental principle of American democracy says that people are free to exercise the faith of their choice, Rotherham said, and as a result, there are clear guidelines for public schools about allowing displays of faith. The same guidelines ensure that the rights of all students are protected.

“There are, of course, problems and incidents from time to time, but overall this is a very pluralistic country and that’s reflected in our public schools,” Rotherham said.

To prepare American students to live and work in the global community, U.S. public schools are incorporating more aggressive foreign language study program. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=November&x=20061108160523berellek0.3019525>).)

Also, international students are encouraged to study in the United States, Rotherham said, and according to a newly released report, growing numbers of non-U.S. students are attending school in the United States. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=November&x=200611131629531CJsamohT0.7242548>).)

Rotherham said students of many cultures and faiths, including Muslims, are welcome to enroll in educational programs in the United States, and several university campuses sponsor interfaith and faith-based curriculums and activities. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=October&x=20061027130412bcrek-law0.503277>).)

“Overall, Americans are a very tolerant people,” he said.

Rotherham is co-founder and co-director of Education Sector, an independent national education policy research organization in Washington. One of the nation’s leading education policy analysts, he is also a member of the Virginia State Board of Education, the author of the blog Eduwonk.com, and a senior fellow at the Progressive Policy Institute in Washington.

For information on studying in the United States, see the State Department’s EducationUSA (<http://www.educationusa.state.gov/>) Web site.

A transcript of Rotherham’s discussion and information on upcoming webchats are available on USINFO’s Webchat Station (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Products/Webchats.html>).

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

World AIDS Pandemic Still Expanding, United Nations Reports

By Charlene Porter
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The number of people living with HIV/AIDS climbed in 2006, the 25th year since first detection of the virus, according to an annual survey of the epidemic conducted by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO), released in Geneva November 21.

The report -- 2006 AIDS Epidemic Update -- points out the "promising developments" made in the last few years to increase access to treatments and expand prevention programs. Still, an estimated 39.5 million people are living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, with 4.3 million new infections in 2006 and almost 3 million deaths.

In 2005, the same annual survey reported about 38.6 million total cases worldwide, but precise comparisons from year to year are difficult to make because the estimates are made in wide ranges.

"In the past two years, the number of people living with HIV increased in every region in the world," according to the report's introduction. "The most striking increases have occurred in East Asia and in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where the number of people living with HIV in 2006 was over one-fifth" (21 percent).

Despite those regional increases, sub-Saharan Africa is still the region most severely affected, home to 63 percent of the total number of those infected worldwide.

"Declines in national HIV prevalence are being observed in some sub-Saharan African countries, but such

trends are currently neither strong nor widespread enough to diminish the epidemics' overall impact in this region," according to the report, considered the most authoritative

such as inequality between men and women and homophobia is absolutely fundamental to the long-term response to AIDS."



A couple in front of an AIDS awareness poster in Beijing

global accounting of the epidemic made each year.

The update is released each year prior to the observance of World AIDS Day on December 1.

THE TRENDS IN INFECTION

The trends detected in the pandemic by the annual survey are just as significant as the numbers, and this year's report reveals how the spread of the disease may take widely different courses in different countries, cultures and subcultures.

"Knowing your epidemic," Dr. Peter Piot, UNAIDS executive director, said in a statement accompanying the report's release, "and understanding the drivers of the epidemic

The epidemic update finds increasing evidence of HIV outbreaks among men who have sex with men in Cambodia, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam and in Latin American nations. At the same time, the national AIDS prevention programs fail to reach these marginalized groups.

In some cases, nations have failed to sustain prevention programs because of a sense that the epidemic has been brought under control. However, new waves of young people continue to reach the age of sexual maturity and become vulnerable to HIV exposure. As a result, infection numbers have remained stable, rather than showing the reductions health officials hope for.

(Continued on page 21)

Elder Muslim Women in Mozambique Spread the Word about HIV/AIDS

In Mozambique, Muslim women are engaged actively in partnerships in hope of turning the tide of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. With support from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR/ Emergency Plan), the Muslim Women's Association in the town of Quelimane receives training to improve members' knowledge of HIV/AIDS, including methods of prevention, counseling and testing.

Empowered by the information, the Muslim Women's Association identified prayer gatherings during the month of Ramadan as an opportunity to inform other Muslim women about services to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. Following prayers at the local mosque, an ensemble of elder and young women presented a role-play performance in which the elders provided advice to young women prior to their entering marital life.

Dona Joana, one of the elder women, said, "It is our tradition and our duty to teach young women how to take care of their husbands and children. Now that we have learned there are diseases with no cure, it is our duty to teach others about this sort of things [sic]."

During the performance, Dona Joana provided information about HIV/AIDS using language familiar to the mosque's wider audience.

"We advise young girls to go to the health center nearby so they can have some analysis [HIV tests]. And in case they have AIDS, the nurse will give a medicine that will prevent their baby to get the bug that causes AIDS," she said. Using these simplified descriptions helped make abstract and complicated information on HIV/AIDS understandable.



Muslim women in Mozambique wait for HIV/AIDS treatment with their infants. PEPFAR/Emergency Plan and the Muslim Women's Association in the town of Quelimane provide training to improve members' knowledge of HIV/AIDS, including methods of prevention, counseling and testing. (AP Images)

The performance's audience actively participated in a play that addressed messages related to faithfulness, the importance of antenatal clinic visits and baby vaccination.

In coordination with host governments, the PEPFAR/Emergency Plan draws on the promise of partnerships with nongovernmental organizations, including faith-based and community-based organizations, to contribute to an effective, multise-

ctoral response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In particular, the extensive geographic reach and well-developed infrastructure faith-based organizations have in the developed world are a critical element to this response.

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Early Infant Diagnosis Saves Lives of Baby Catherine and Family

Diagnosing children with HIV before they are 18 months old has proven difficult in Uganda and other developing nations. Many untreated, HIV-positive infants die before their second birthday.

Now, early infant diagnostic technologies supported by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan/PEPFAR) are available to babies at Mulago Hospital in Uganda. With the early infant diagnosis method, health care providers can diagnose infants with HIV as early as six weeks after birth.

Through a partnership between the postnatal clinic at the hospital and a PEPFAR partner organization, the clinic now identifies and tests infants when they are brought in for postnatal and routine immunization visits. Since the start of these early diagnosis services in August 2005, more than 2,000 infants have been screened for HIV.

For Kayondo Minsuseera and Nakwany Florence, parents of baby Catherine, early infant diagnosis brought them hope. From birth, Catherine had continually fallen ill with persistent high temperatures and convulsions. Her development

was retarded, and at one year of age she weighed only 11 pounds. In February 2006, Catherine's parents were referred to Mulago's postnatal clinic.

now all receiving antiretroviral treatment and care services. Each day, the parents remind each other to take their pills.

"After a lot of counseling and preparation we agreed to be tested. We are a free family now," Minsuseera noted.

Mulago also provides the family with basic disease prevention assistance including insecticide-treated bed nets, a safe water system, and information about positive living strategies. In addition, the Pediatric Infectious Disease Clinic at Mulago provides supplementary food to Catherine, helps cover the costs of transportation to her clinic appointments and provides ongoing family counseling. The family said this support has "helped us from being depressed and to escape our thoughts."

Catherine recently celebrated her second birthday. Today, she walks, runs, plays and speaks just like other children her age.

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Parents wait with children for AIDS treatment in Uganda where early infant diagnostics are available through PEPFAR. (USAID photo)

Health workers at the clinic explained to Minsuseera and Florence the testing process and helped them feel comfortable. After testing, the clinic found Catherine and her parents to be HIV-positive.

With support from the emergency plan, Catherine and her family are

Scholarship Program Helps AIDS Orphans Fulfill a Dream

Morris Kaburu, age 20, like many others in Kenya, has lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS. At age 8, Kaburu lost his mother. Then, with a father who took very little care of his needs and uncles who sent him away from the only home he knew, hope seemed like a myth. Kaburu, struggling through life with a stepmother and an abusive father, relied on a government scholarship to attend school. His father later died of HIV-related complications, a fact that his uncles hid from him because of fear of stigma.

For many young people like Kaburu, education has been a casualty of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. To address this problem, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan/PEPFAR) supports programs to help children attend school. Started in 2004 with support from PEPFAR, the Peace Corps Orphans Scholarship Program has been bringing hope to orphans who have lost parents or guardians to AIDS-related illnesses.

In partnership with host nations, PEPFAR supports a wide-range of efforts to help families, communities and governments care for children living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

PEPFAR programs include caregiver training, support for access to education, economic support, targeted food and nutritional support, legal aid, medical, psychological and emotional care, and other social and material support.

The Joint U.N. Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimates that more

than 15 million children have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS. Because this number will almost double over the next 10 years, support for orphans and vulnerable children is critical.



*PEPFAR scholarship beneficiary
Morris Kaburu*

Despite all his hardships, Kaburu still found time to volunteer at a Kenya Red Cross outstation in the town of Meru, approximately 352 kilometers outside Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. "One of the most ironic things about working at the station was that I counseled youth and trained them in peer leadership, yet I needed such guidance myself," Kaburu said.

Kaburu's leadership in high school was obvious and his excellent performance in academics remarkable. However, Kaburu notes, "It is one thing to be intelligent, and a totally different one to have money to finance educational advancement of that intelligence. ... This was unachievable."

Today, Kaburu is a first-year law student at Moi University in Eldoret, Kenya. He is one of the most enthusiastic young beneficiaries of the Peace Corps Orphans Scholarship Program. Kaburu first learned about the scholarship program from a former Peace Corps Volunteer, who served in Kaburu's home region.

"There is something about volunteering and helping other people that connects you with people who care about you," Kaburu said.

The scholarship program gave Kaburu hope that he could achieve his dream of becoming a lawyer. "I want to be a human rights lawyer. I have seen it all, and law is my way of ending what I have gone through," he stated.

With the support of the American people, young leaders like Kaburu are leading the fight against HIV/AIDS in their nations and communities, restoring hope for a brighter future.

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Care Center Shows AIDS Is Not the “End of the World”

Philani Mono, a resident of South Africa, has experienced first-hand the benefits of President Bush’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. He recently shared his story with a staff member at the U.S. Embassy in Johannesburg.

“I am a patient at Aurum Care Centre, based in Johannesburg, South Africa, which is funded through President Bush’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). I was transferred from Soweto Hospice to the Aurum’s care centre in June 2004. I was very ill and had given up on life. I lost my wife in 2003 and had to leave my 10-year-old daughter in my aunt’s care. Death was real to me. I suffered from tuberculosis (TB), severe nerve disease (neuropathy) and anorexia. The neuropathy caused me to lose the feeling in my legs, so I have to use a wheelchair.

“Today, two years later, I am enjoying life again. With highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART), I improved my health. Now I can assist my daughter financially with help from a disability grant. I have also done a computer course. I am studying basic counseling and testing skills so that I can help other HIV-infected South Africans.

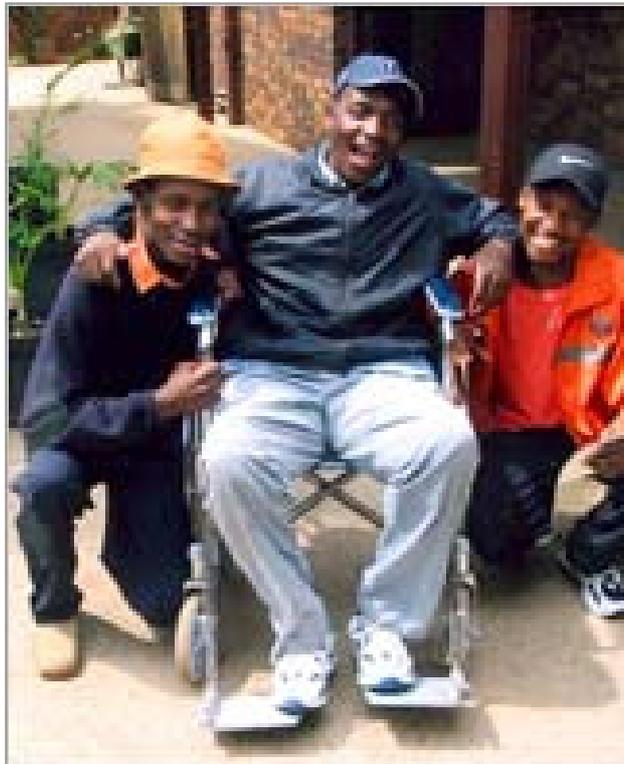
“Although I still need a wheelchair, I am thankful for the opportunity to live and watch my daughter grow up. I look forward to sharing my experience by counseling other patients admitted to the Aurum Care Centre. The word, “Aurum”, means “gold”. Life is precious. The ques-

tion is what we are going to do with the gift?

“My friend Alex was admitted to the Care Centre at the age of 26. The inner city streets were his home since childhood. His immune system was weak as HIV attacked his body. The CD4 count that measures cells in the immune system is normally between 800 and

reunited with his family and lives with them.

“Lucky, another friend, was a sales person before he became infected. He was so frail he practically limped into the Aurum Care Centre. His pain was so unbearable that he wished to die. The staff wanted him to live and prayed with him everyday.



Philani, center, and friends, Alex, left, and Lucky, at the Aurum Care Centre. (U.S. Embassy/South Africa)

“His faith became stronger with the loving support he got at the Centre. His pain lessened due to ART. Lucky slowly started walking again and can now walk from his home to the Aurum Care Centre. He is studying to become a pastor and will graduate soon. Lucky tells everybody that he had everything, but almost lost his life from one mistake. He appreciates the valuable gift of life.

“These stories describe the three of us so far. Sadly, we have lost friends to AIDS, but our philosophy is to never give up. Fight with all you have left in your body and soul.

“I extend my sincere thanks and devotion to all the staff at the Aurum Care Centre, our donors, especially PEP-

1000. Alex’s was far below that amount. He was wasted, confused and delusional. He began taking TB treatment. For weeks after admission, Alex just slept. He only woke up when the bell rang for meals.

“All of us thought that Alex was too ill to recover, but he did not give up on life. After two months on TB treatment, he started antiretroviral therapy (ART). His condition improved radically. Today, Alex is

FAR, visitors and families. Without you, we never would have had the opportunity to enjoy life again. To God Almighty, I will remain humble for His Love and the second chance to live a better life. To those who are not sure about their status, I trust my letter will give you the courage to be tested. We will be there for you. All you need to do is to take that first step. Remember, AIDS is not the end of the world!”
♦

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World AIDS Pandemic Still Expanding, . . .

(Continued from page 16)

Uganda demonstrated significant success over the last 10 years in reducing the numbers of new infections occurring in its population, but now research indicates increasing infection rates in rural areas.

"This means that countries are not moving at the same speed as their epidemics," said Piot. "We need to greatly intensify life-saving prevention efforts while we expand HIV treatment programmes."

U.S. EFFORTS TO PROVIDE TREATMENT

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has been a key program to increase the numbers of people receiving ARVs.

Launched in 2003, PEPFAR is a \$15 billion, five-year emergency plan, providing funds to fight the pandemic in 100 countries, with a special focus on the 15 hardest-hit countries. At latest count, the program, working with scores of part-

ner organizations at the local level, has begun drug treatment for more than 560,000 people.

A State Department fact sheet provides a broader overview of the services being provided to communities beset with the epidemic:

Prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission for women in more than 4.5 million pregnancies;

Anti-retroviral prophylaxis for women during 342,200 pregnancies and prevention of an estimated 65,100 infant HIV infections; and

Counseling and testing services for more than 13.6 million men, women and children

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Media Making Strides in Africa, Thanks to Technology, Training . . .

(Continued from page 4)

national. Thomas has covered every U.S. president since John F. Kennedy and is now sharing her experiences with foreign reporters.

ECA's International Visitor Leadership Program also is responsible for the Edward R. Murrow Program, which has brought hundreds of foreign journalists to America for training.

In March, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Dina Powell welcomed 129 journalists from 100 nations who were participating in the Murrow program. She said the program "emphasizes many democratic principles that guided its namesake in the practice of his profession, including integrity, ethics, courage and social responsibility. A free

press is the foundation of a free society."

Another State Department program that is helping journalists is the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), which is funding a training project involving the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and Qatar University. Its purpose is to promote news reporting and other journalism skills through the mass communication program at Qatar University. New funding will pay for more journalism courses, a student newspaper; new communication technology and a student and faculty exchange and internship program.

Journalists in South Africa also are sharpening their investigative journalism skills via a program funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development in conjunction with Rhodes University and the

University of the Witwatersrand.

"Africa doesn't have the most impressive track record for independent and open media environments, and reporters often lack access to professional training," says Rhodes program coordinator Derek Luyt. That will change now with the training in investigative techniques the course offers, he added.

For more information on U.S. policy, see Freedom of the Press (http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/rule_of_law/press_freedom.html).

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