



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

Ambassador Yamamoto Visits Children-Focused Projects in Addis Ababa

Monday, April 30 -- Ambassador Yamamoto visited several programs of Save the Children Federation (U.S.) focused on orphans and vulnerable children. Save the Children, with partners CARE, Family Health International, World Learning, World Vision and the Hope for African Children Initiative (HACI), recently launched the 'Positive Change program throughout Ethiopia.

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Ambassador Yamamoto greeting Selamber Public Primary School children in their classroom.

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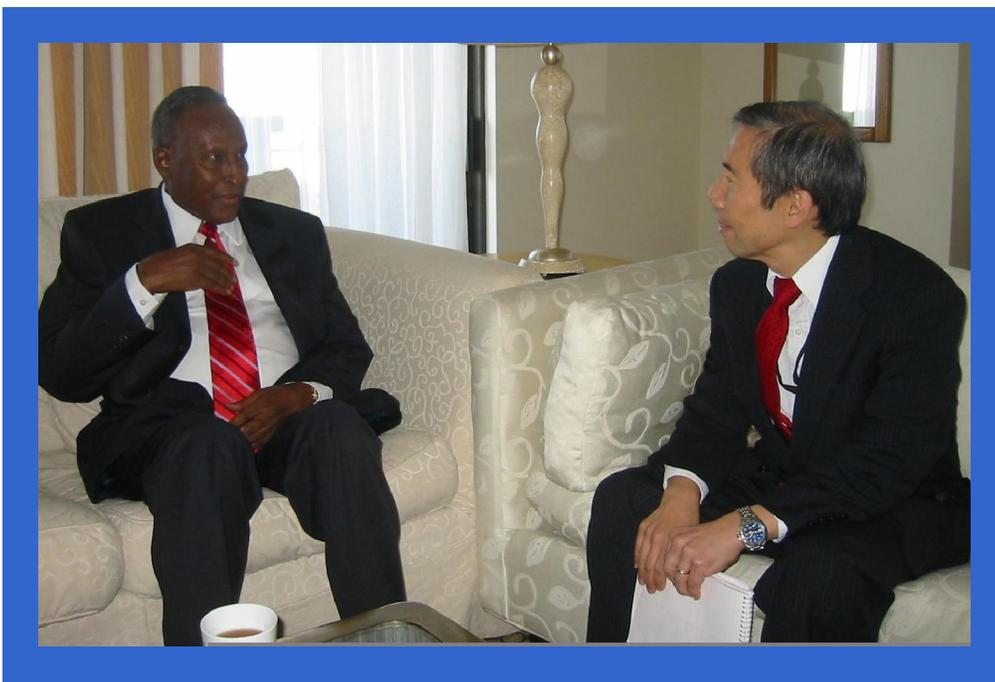
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Addis Ababa, April 20, 2007 -- Ambassador Don Yamamoto meets with Somalia Transitional Federal Government interim President Abdulahi Yusuf during his recent visit to Addis Ababa.

Ethiopian Artist Bekele Mekonnen Awarded Prestigious Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant

Addis Ababa (U.S. Embassy) – The United States Embassy extends its congratulations and is pleased to announce that Bekele Mekonnen, painter, poet, sculptor and lecturer at the School of Fine Arts and Design of Addis Ababa University (AAU), has been awarded a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant of \$20,000. The award was announced in New York on February 20, 2007 by the Chairman of the Board of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation INC. Bekele Mekonnen was selected from a number of contestant throughout the world by a distinguished committee of art professionals for his achievements in art work.

During his distinguished career, Bekele Mekonnen has won several awards and staged numerous art exhibitions. In 1998, he was the first Ethiopian artist to win the Chicago Artists International Program, and worked for one month in residency with Chicago-based artists and arts organizations. Bekele was one of only 11 international winners who were nominated by the then United States Informa-

tion Service (USIS) posts around the world. He was the only visual artist among the group.

He was also the first visual artist to receive the Scholar Rescue Fund



Visual artist and poet Bekele Mekonnen

Award, a program of the Institute of International Education, in New York in 2006.

Bekele was also invited by the Maryland Institute College of Art to be an Artist in Residence from January to August 2006 to lecture

and participate in classes at the college in Baltimore, Maryland. He has been invited to the United States many times to lecture in several universities and colleges, and has worked in U.S. art colleges in Europe, such as SACI in Florence, Italy.

Bekele has presented international exhibitions and lectures about sculpture and art history. He earned a Masters of Fine Art in Sculpture from Moscow State Institute of Fine Arts in 1993.

The Pollock-Krasner Foundation's mission is to aid, internationally, those individuals who have worked as artists over a significant period of time. The Foundation's dual criteria for grants are recognizable artistic merit and financial need, whether professional, personal or both. Since its inception in 1985, the Foundation has awarded 2,747 grants totaling over 40 million dollars to artists in 66 countries. ♦

Ambassador Yamamoto Visits Children Focused . . .

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Designed to reach 500,000 children affected by HIV/AIDS over five years, Positive Change seeks to improve the lives of orphans and other vulnerable children and their households, through psychosocial support, health and nutrition, livelihood, life skills, and educational support. Along with local civil society organizations and community groups, Positive Change works to increase the availability, quality and consistency of community-based care and support services for OVC and HIV/AIDS-affected families, through intensive capacity strengthening of local groups and organizations. ♦

Financial Aid Awarded to Students Enrolled in Advising Sessions at U.S. Embassy

Addis Ababa (U.S. Embassy) -- More than 100 hundred interested prospective students have come to the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in 2007 looking for information about education in the USA. This is an outcome of the educational advising services currently being offered at the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa. In addition, outreach programs to universities in Jimma, Gondar, Mekelle, and Bahir Dar have drawn a large number of people interested in obtaining information about "Study in the USA."

As a result of this revamped effort, scholarships amounting over



126,000 USD have been granted to three young Ethiopians by universities and colleges in the US. One undergraduate student in Biochemistry and two graduate students in Electrical, Electronics and Communications have so far received full scholarships and assistantships that will help fund their studies in the U.S. More advisees are expected

to receive financial assistance from U.S. schools as admission decisions are announced in the next few months.

The Public Affairs Section promotes further study at US colleges and universities by delivering advising sessions at the U.S. Embassy and also at universities and colleges around Ethiopia.

For further information, please contact Yoseph Shiferaw, Cultural Affairs Specialist, Public Affairs Office, U.S. Embassy, Tel: 011-517-4223 ♦

Improving Reporting About HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia

Local media can play a significant role in helping Ethiopians cope with the challenge of HIV/AIDS. To be effective, journalists must be informed correctly about the disease and available treatment.

In order to help the media become a positive force in addressing HIV/AIDS, Internews launched the Local Voices project in Ethiopia in 2005, with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development and continuing support from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), to train and support local radio journalists, talk show hosts and DJs to improve their reporting and programming on issues related to HIV/AIDS. Local

Voices aims to create a supportive social environment that will help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. It also aims to lessen the impact of the disease on communities by providing local journalists with training in reporting on health issues.

During one Local Voices training, journalists and their trainers interacted with people living with HIV/AIDS at an organization that provides care and anti-retroviral treatment. At the end of the workshop, the trainees had articles ready for publication and plans for future articles.

The project also held a workshop for radio talk show hosts, who then included information about HIV/AIDS

in their radio shows.

Through better reporting and programming, the journalists were able to reach out to approximately 6 million Ethiopians to give them information critical to protecting themselves from the virus and to caring for people who are infected.

"Journalists can make a tremendous change in society by informing and educating," said one journalist. "I can upgrade my knowledge and influence others about AIDS."

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

Somalia Radio Program Changing Lives in Mogadishu

Eight-year-old Najmo lives with her parents in the Hodan District in Mogadishu, Somalia. Najmo is among the fortunate few Somali students who have access to school, attending first grade at Al Imra School.

In Somalia, only 20 percent of all children are enrolled in school and public funding for primary education is among the lowest in the world. The new Transitional Federal Government is working to rebuild the education sector and restore stability to the country, but fighting still can erupt at a moment's notice.

When fighting recently erupted in Mogadishu, Najmo was forced to stay home. All the schools were shut and children were not allowed to go out. Fortunately, Najmo's family has a radio at home.

The Somalia Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) program, sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), is providing an alternative to regular classroom lessons. Through distance-learning radio classes operated by Education Development Center Inc., up to

400,000 Somali schoolchildren are receiving daily lessons in reading, math and life skills.



Najmo with her radio

The lessons are developed for grades one through six and also give access to those who have missed out on educational opportunities, particularly women and girls, illiterate street children and people who have left their homes because of fighting. To reach the largest

number of students throughout Somalia, IRI programs are supported and delivered through a network of public and private schools and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

"I learned many lessons without going to school. I am happy now, but I truly hate the fighting," Najmo said.

According to Najmo's mother: "My daughter is all morning busy with the radio programs. She has great enthusiasm for these radio programs and made us also love the program."

The girl's father says: "She asks me questions about her lessons and she required us to listen to the radio programs with her every day and answer her questions. We all thank those who prepared these effective radio programs for our kids."

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

Threat of Major Terror Attack in Americas Remains Low

Threat of Major Terror Attack in Americas Remains Low

Washington -- The threat of a major terrorist attack remains low for most countries in the Western Hemisphere, according to a new State Department report.

Issued April 30, State's Country Reports on Terrorism said most governments in the region took "modest steps" to improve their

counterterrorism capabilities and tighten border security.

Terrorism in the Western Hemisphere came primarily from organizations based in Colombia and by the remnants of radical leftist Andean region groups, said the report, which covers the year 2006.

Except for the United States and Canada where suspected terrorists were prosecuted, the region had no

known operational cells of Islamic terrorists. The report indicated, however, that pockets of "ideological supporters and facilitators" in South America and the Caribbean lent "financial, logistical, and moral support" to terrorist groups in the Middle East.

The United States enjoyed solid cooperation on terror-related matters from most hemisphere partners, and

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Threat of Major Terror Attack in Americas Remains Low . . .

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maintained "excellent" intelligence, law enforcement, and legal assistance relations with most countries in the region, said the report.

Mexico and Canada were called "key partners" against terrorism and for U.S. homeland security. U.S. cooperation with those countries, according to the report, was "broad and deep."

Mexico represented primarily a terrorist transit threat, and the Mexican government worked with the United States to enhance aviation, border, maritime, and transportation security to secure critical infrastructure, and to combat terrorism financing. Canada collaborated extensively with the United States on a broad array of initiatives, exercises and joint operations that spanned virtually all agencies and every level of government.

Caribbean and Central American nations, "recognizing their attractiveness and vulnerability to attack or transit by terrorists, took steps to improve their border controls and to secure key infrastructure," said the report. It added that most countries in the region began to look "seriously at possible connections between transnational criminals and terrorist organizations."

Colombia merited special praise for emerging as a regional leader in improving counterterrorism capabilities and for "strengthening political will to combat terrorism" in the Western Hemisphere.

The report said that building on U.S. counterterrorism aid, Colombia provided training to regional neighbors on anti-kidnapping efforts and cyber-investigations, and as-

sumed the chair of the Organization of American States' Inter-American Committee against Terrorism, which is the only permanent regional multilateral group that focuses exclusively on counterterrorism.

The United States remained fully committed to helping Colombia defeat Colombian-based terrorist groups, said the report. The Colombian government also increased its efforts with neighboring countries to thwart terrorist expansion, investigate terrorist activities inside and outside Colombia, seize assets and bring terrorists to justice.

The U.S.-Colombia extradition relationship was described as remaining the most successful of its kind in the world. Colombia extradited 102 criminals to the United States in 2006, the vast majority of whom were Colombian nationals. The threat of extradition to the United States is considered a "strong weapon" that the Colombian government can use against terrorists operating in its territory, said the report.

Venezuela, meanwhile, merited criticism for not cooperating fully with U.S. anti-terrorism efforts.

The report said Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez persisted in public criticism of U.S. counterterrorism efforts, deepened Venezuelan relationships with two state sponsors of terrorism -- Iran and Cuba -- and was unwilling to prevent Venezuelan territory from being used as a safe haven by Colombian-based terrorist groups.

State sponsors of terrorism make it easier for terrorist groups to conduct operations. Most worrisome, some of these state terrorism sponsors are said to have the capability

to manufacture weapons of mass destruction that could get into the hands of terrorists, according to the report.

The report said it remained unclear to what extent the Venezuelan government provided material support to Colombian terrorists. However, limited amounts of weapons and ammunition -- some from official Venezuelan stocks and facilities -- have turned up in the hands of Colombian terrorist organizations. The report said the Venezuelan government did not "systematically police" the Venezuelan-Colombian border to prevent the movement of groups of armed terrorists or to interdict arms or the flow of narcotics.

Cuba received criticism for continuing to oppose publicly the U.S.-led coalition prosecuting the War on Terror. To U.S. knowledge, Cuba did not attempt to track, block, or seize terrorist assets, although it had the authority to do so, according to the report.

The report said the Cuban government provided safe haven to members of foreign terrorist groups, and maintained close relationships with other state sponsors of terrorism.

The Cuban regime continued to permit U.S. fugitives to live legally in Cuba. The U.S. fugitives range from convicted murderers, two of whom killed police officers, to numerous hijackers.

For more information, see Response to Terrorism (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/terrorism.html).

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

Unlikely Ties Connect Iran and Portland, Oregon

By Steve Holgate
USINFO Special Correspondent

Portland, Oregon -- At first the connection between Shiraz, Iran, and Portland, Oregon, appears negligible. Yes, Shiraz is the City of Roses and Nightingales, and so is Portland -- except for the nightingales. One of Portland's few noted authors, the late Terrence O'Donnell, wrote a classic volume of reminiscences set on a farm in the Iranian countryside not far from Shiraz. And a number of vineyards in Portland's home state of Oregon grow Shiraz grapes.

Yet the unlikeliest ties can prove unexpectedly strong, and a recent flurry of events in Portland shows that a surprisingly multifaceted relationship exists between Iran -- Shiraz in particular -- and this medium-size city in the green and mountainous northwest corner of the United States.

Among the city's recent actions: Portland Mayor Tom Potter declared the first day of "Nowruz" (Persian New Year) as "Persian Culture Appreciation Day"; Portland's City Council passed a resolution that, among other things, declared friendship between the city and the people of Iran; and the city declared its intent to become a sister city with Shiraz. Portland State University, the city's largest institution of higher education, recently re-established a professorship in Persian language and studies after a break of several decades.

Such a multidimensional list of connections cannot be attributed to one person or even to one group, but much of the impetus behind the relationship comes from a group called the American Iranian Friendship Committee (AIFC). AIFC, an informal gathering of local Iranian

Americans, former Peace Corps volunteers and others who have traveled, lived or studied in Iran, was formed in 2006 to strengthen ties between Portland and Iran.

The unofficial leader of the group is Goudarz Eghtedari, a stocky, soft-spoken Iranian-American with a serious manner and a ready smile. The host of a radio talk show devoted to Middle East issues, Eghtedari moved to Portland during the 1990s. In a recent interview with US-INFO, he explained that his aim in helping form the AIFC was to strengthen friendship between Iran and Portland.

"The group," he said, "came from a few of us talking together and thinking, 'Let's gather some people who have had this experience [with Iran] and provide a facility for exchange.'"

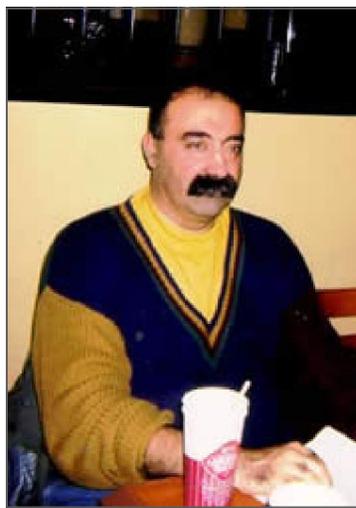
Within a few months, the group had organized a panel discussion to help Portlanders better understand Iranian culture and society. As part of the two-day event, AIFC also produced a "Jamming for Peace" concert, featuring an Iraqi "oud" player extemporizing with an Iranian musician on a "ney." Eghtedari smiled as he recalled, "We also invited some Jewish American [musicians], to exemplify harmonious relations between people."

Making the event fully ecumenical, the concert was held in a downtown Christian church. It drew a diverse crowd of several hundred listeners. "All we are trying to do,"

Eghtedari says of the group's many activities, "is to provide a mechanism to promote friendship."

Among the other members of AIFC is Gretchen Kafoury, a Peace Corps volunteer in Iran during the 1960s. She recalled her two years in Iran with great fondness and calls her

work there "life-changing." Of the group's formation, she says it was part of an effort to put a human face on Iran and to emphasize its 5,000-year history. "It's a rich, wonderful country that should be viewed in a much broader context than [President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad," she said.



Goudarz Eghtedari

For many years an elected official in the Portland area, and at

one time a member of the Portland City Council, Kafoury spearheaded AIFC's efforts to win City Council approval of the resolution expressing friendship with Iran and pledging to undertake a sister city relationship with Shiraz.

Many of the same people who formed the AIFC were also members of a group that worked with Portland State University to re-establish a tenured professor's position in Farsi within the university's highly regarded Middle East Studies Center. Speaking of the justification for the position, Eghtedari told USINFO: "It's obvious to anybody that Iran plays an important role in the region. Being able to have some folks who can speak the language, read the newspapers ... is necessary."

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Bush Thanks Nations of Global Counterterrorism Coalition

By David McKeeby
USINFO Staff Writer

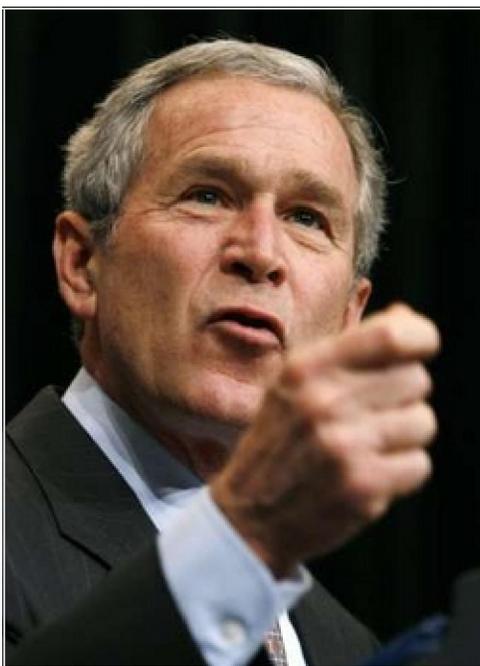
Washington -- More than 90 countries have joined the United States in an international counterterrorism coalition, which has prevented attacks and confronted extremism in Afghanistan and Iraq, President Bush says.

"An era of new threats requires new forms of engagement, new strategies and new tactics. So we've reinvigorated historic alliances such as NATO and formed new and dynamic coalitions to address the dangers of our time," Bush said May 1 at U.S. Central Command headquarters in Tampa, Florida.

Victims from more than 80 countries were killed in the September 11, 2001, attacks on New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, Bush said, a tragedy which since has been replayed in Mombasa, Kenya; Casablanca, Morocco; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Jakarta, Indonesia; Istanbul, Turkey; London; Amman, Jordan, Madrid, Spain; Beslan, Russia; Bali, Indonesia; Algiers, Algeria, and elsewhere.

Terrorists such as al-Qaida kill ruthlessly, target indiscriminately and seek even deadlier weapons for future attacks, Bush said. The international community must remain on the offensive, he said, adding that as in the Cold War, "it is vital that allies, despite occasional disagreements, hold firm against vicious and determined enemies."

The United States and its partners have shared intelligence that has helped disrupt many attacks, Bush said, including plots against embassies in Yemen and Singapore and plans to attack shipping in the



President Bush speaks at the CENTCOM in Tampa, Florida, May 1, 2007. REUTERS

Straits of Hormuz and the Straits of Gibraltar, as well as the 2006 terrorist conspiracy to bomb U.S.-bound trans-Atlantic flights.

Cooperation among financial institutions has helped freeze terrorists' bank accounts and disrupted their ability to recruit, train and finance new attacks, he said.

Nations also have come together to provide training and equipment to countries where terrorists create instability while seeking to establish new bases, Bush said. U.S. and other international military forces have helped Indonesia and the Philippines become more effective at fighting terrorists, while programs such as the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership and the East African Counterterrorism Initiative have helped security forces in 17 African countries become more effective and self-sufficient allies against terrorism, he said.

More than 80 nations have joined the Proliferation Security Initiative, Bush said, which works to stop shipments of materials related to highly destructive weapons on land, at sea, and in the air, Bush said.

Bush also stressed the international community's role in confronting extremism in two central fronts in the struggle against terrorism -- Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Taliban and al-Qaida still are fighting to roll back the success made by the Afghan people, Bush said, who since 2001 have chosen their first democratically elected president and National Assembly, have doubled their economy and have welcomed back 4.6 million refugees who fled decades of violence and instability.

The 32 member states of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force will continue to support Afghan army and police units, Bush said, as they go on the offensive to stop terrorist attacks and secure the country, while an additional 20 nations remain dedicated to helping the Afghans rebuild. Turning to Iraq, Bush thanked the 30 nations that make up the multinational coalition in Iraq, including 17 nations that have participated in NATO's training mission for Iraqi security forces and the Republic of Georgia, which recently agreed to deploy 2,000 more troops.

Leaving Iraq too soon would have lasting repercussions in the region and the world, he said. Radicals and extremists would be emboldened, better able to attract new recruits and left to believe that they could strike free nations anywhere, he said. ♦

Global Terrorist Threat Seen Undergoing Change

By David McKeeby
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Although the United States has built strong international partnerships against terrorism, the changing nature of the threat continues to present significant challenges, a top U.S. counterterrorism official says.

"The international community is working together to confront these extremists because they threaten the right of people everywhere to live in peaceful, just, secure neighborhoods," says Frank Urbanic, the State Department's acting coordinator for counterterrorism.

The State Department released its Country Reports on Terrorism 2006 April 30 along with a statistical report from the National Counterterrorism Center.

The report highlights the international community's success in confronting terrorism through closer coordination and intelligence sharing, which Urbanic said has strengthened border security, made counterfeit travel documents harder to acquire and allowed bank accounts used by terrorists to become easier to find and freeze.

"We have created a less permissive operating environment for terrorists, keeping leaders on the move or in hiding, and degraded their ability to plan and mount attacks," he said. "The longer we fight terrorism, the better we get at inflicting serious setbacks to our adversaries."

But despite these advances, the report found that 14,338 terrorist attacks targeted 74,543 civilians in 2006, resulting in 20,498 deaths, a 25 percent increase in attacks and

a 40 percent increase in fatalities from 2005. More than half of these incidents in 2006 and two-thirds of related deaths occurred in Iraq and Afghanistan, Urbanic said, both considered by the United States to be "central fronts in the War on Terror."

Elsewhere in the world, he said, the report found significant decreases in terrorist violence, including a 15 percent decline in Europe and Eurasia, a 20 percent decline in South and Central Asia, and a 5 percent decrease in the Western Hemisphere, all of which could be attributed to increased international cooperation.

A major trend in 2006, Urbanic said, was al-Qaida's effort to compensate for its weaknesses by transforming itself into a "transnational guerrilla movement." The group increasingly focused on propaganda and misinformation, particularly on the Internet, he said. Such efforts are an attempt to manipulate political grievances and gain more recruits from within immigrant communities already living within targeted countries, thus circumventing stronger border security, he added.

The report finds that state sponsors of terrorism, such as Iran and Syria, also continue to be a major challenge, Urbanic said. In addition to their role in further destabilizing Iraq, Lebanon and efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Urbanic also underlined the increased threat that state sponsors of terrorism could help extremists acquire weapons of mass destruction.

A third challenge, he added, is terrorist safe havens, such as the trans-Sahara area, Somalia, the Sulawesi-Sulu Seas and the Afghani-

stan-Pakistan border, where extremists can find shelter to rebuild and plan future attacks.

Central to countering this threat, Urbanic said, is the U.S. long-term strategy of building "trusted networks."

"Our strategy to defeat terrorists is structured at multiple levels," Urbanic said, "a global campaign to counter violent extremism and disrupt terrorist networks; a series of regional collaborative efforts to deny terrorists safe haven; and numerous bilateral security and development assistance programs designed to build liberal institutions, support law enforcement and the rule of law, address political and economic injustice, and develop military and security capacity."

Stronger ties between government organizations and businesses, he said, can help countries to become more secure and self-sufficient, promote political reforms and encourage new economic opportunities to defuse many of the frustrations that cause people to turn to terrorism.

These networks also include increased international people-to-people contacts that can help break the extremists' information monopoly and provide a positive alternative to their radical ideology.

The complete text (<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/>) of the report is available from the State Department Web site.

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

Freedom of the Press Endangered in Many Countries

By Jane Morse
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Conditions for independent media are worsening in many parts of the world, and this trend threatens both democracy and respect for human rights, say U.S. officials and experts on the media.

An independent, free press is essential to democracy and holds governments accountable to its citizens, according to Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes and Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky.

Both were featured speakers at a May 1 conference on "21st Century Threats to Press Freedom," sponsored by the Broadcasting Board of Governors and Freedom House. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Barry Lowenkron also made remarks.

The conference focused on the increasing threats to journalists around the world, in particular the record number of journalists killed in 2006. Reports show that more than 110 journalists and media workers were killed in 2006, making it the bloodiest year on record for journalists.

Hughes, who worked for nearly seven years as a reporter in Texas before beginning her career in politics, said a free press is essential in cultivating free thought and in exposing crime and human rights abuses. Unfortunately, journalists and media specialists are increasingly being killed, arrested, injured and harassed for their work, she said.

But the United States, she said, "defends the defenders of freedom." She said that the U.S. Department of State provides a num-

Dobriansky said the United States considers freedom of the press to be so crucial to democracy and human rights that it has included



Journalists shave their heads as a sign of protest on March 1, 2006, at the National Press Club in Manila, Philippines.

ber of professional development and exchange programs for journalists, editors and media managers from around the world through the Edward R. Murrow Journalism Fellowships and other programs.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice established last year the Global Internet Freedom Task Force (GIFT), an internal State Department coordination group that works with other U.S. government agencies and the National Security and National Economic Councils, Hughes noted. GIFT's goal is to maximize the free flow of information and ideas, to minimize the success of repressive regimes in censoring and silencing legitimate debate and to promote access to information and ideas over the Internet.

evaluations of press freedoms in various countries in the U.S. State Department's annual Country Reports on Human Rights.

INTIMIDATION OF JOURNALISTS MAY BE "PUSH BACK" AGAINST DEMOCRACY

Jennifer Windsor, the executive director of Freedom House, a non-profit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting democracy and freedom around the world, said that only 18 percent of the world's population enjoys the benefits of a free press.

Windsor reported that press freedoms have either stagnated or decreased in many countries around

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United States Supports Press Freedom Worldwide

"... there is no more important pillar of democracy than a free and active press." - Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

As part of President George W. Bush's Freedom Agenda, the United States views freedom of the press as a key component of democracy. The free exchange of ideas fosters accountable government and allows the viewpoints of many, including the marginalized in a society, to be heard. The United States works bilaterally and multilaterally in many ways to support press freedom worldwide.

THREATS TO A FREE PRESS

Reports indicate that over 110 journalists and media workers were killed in 2006, making it the bloodiest year on record for journalism. These incidents highlight the significant dangers journalists and media workers face throughout the world as well as the need to improve respect for freedom of the press and the safety of journalists.

U.S. INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

The United States works to protect and promote press freedom at home and to spotlight places where press freedom is threatened abroad.

Reporting and Denouncing Violations

- The U.S. State Department's annual Country Reports on Human Rights spotlight threats facing a free press and are a tool for governments, NGOs and citizens. In 2006, for the first time, the Reports included a section on Internet freedom.

Supporting a Free Press through Programs and Exchanges

- The State Department provides professional development and exchange programs for journalists, editors and media manag-

COUNTRIES WITH CONTINUALLY POOR RECORDS ON PRESS FREEDOM

Burma	Eritrea
North Korea	Equatorial Guinea
Cuba	Iran
Turkmenistan	Tunisia
Uzbekistan	Syria
Belarus	China
Zimbabwe	

COUNTRIES WITH DETERIORATING CONDITIONS FOR PRESS FREEDOM

Afghanistan	Venezuela
Pakistan	Russia
Philippines	Egypt
Lebanon	

ers from around the world, such as the Edward R. Morrow Journalism Fellowships. It supports journalists producing radio and television programs that are independent of state-controlled media. The U.S. funds NGOs that promote a free press abroad, and defends journalists under threat.

Promoting Internet Freedom

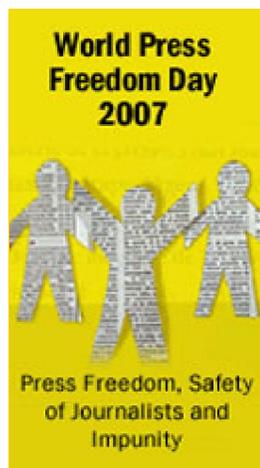
- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice launched the Global Internet Freedom Task Force in February, 2006, to maximize the free flow of information on the Internet while minimizing the abilities of repressive regimes to censor it.

WORKING MULTILATERALLY *UNESCO*

- The United States was a founding member and is the fourth largest donor of UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication

(IPDC) that promotes media independence in developing countries.

- Since rejoining UNESCO in 2003, the United States has increased its donations to the IPDC five-fold to \$300,000 and has funded many of its media development projects, including in Afghanistan, Colombia, Cameroon, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Rwanda, and Uganda.
- The United States commemorates the UN-sponsored World Press Freedom Day on May 3. And the United States joins UNESCO in honoring Anna Politkovskaya of Russia, who is being posthumously awarded the 2007 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize.



UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

- The United States passionately supported freedom of the press and the free flow of information at both phases of the UN World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005.
- The United States supports the free expression principles listed in the WSIS Declaration of Principles and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as they apply to the Internet and the need for them to be honored even in connection with efforts to promote security and fight crime. ♦

Freedom of the Press Endangered in Many Countries . . .

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the world. Most of the decline, she said, is taking place in Asia, Latin America and the former Soviet Union. Windsor called this “a push back against democracy.”

According to Alcee Hastings, a Democratic representative from Florida and the chair of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission), authoritarian leaders around the world understand the power of the press, “that’s why they strive to control it.” In Russia, for example, nearly 80 percent of the population gets information from just three media outlets that are controlled by the government of Vladimir Putin. Russia, he noted, has become the third-deadliest country in the world for journalists.

Most of the former Soviet states regard free media as “a threat to be neutralized,” Hastings said. “The only security for all is a free press,” Hastings said, and he decried ef-

forts to cut back funding for U.S. broadcasting to the former Soviet republics. The Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty are needed now more than ever, he said.

EFFORTS TO STIFLE MEDIA CAN BE SUBTLE

Not all government efforts to repress a free press are obvious, some experts suggested.

In China, which leads the world in jailing journalists, censorship is delivered orally, in secret, and exerts “invisible control,” says Perry Link, professor of East Asian studies at Princeton University.

“Today the Communist Party uses the media to manipulate its message,” Link said. “Repression 40 years ago hurt Chinese citizens. Now it can hurt the rest of the world,” he warned, as lack of accurate information on topics such as avian influenza and HIV/AIDS outbreaks can threaten health around

the world.

In Egypt, the government censors only randomly but punishes severely when it does, according to Jon Alterman, director and senior fellow at the Middle East Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The result, he said, is to produce enough fear that the media censor themselves.

A fact sheet (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/scp/84025.htm>) on U.S. support for press freedom can be found 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).

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

Unlikely Ties Connect Iran and Portland, Oregon . . .

(Continued from page 6)

Eghtedari and Kafoury share with other members of the group a strong belief that Iranian-American friendship has much to offer the people of both countries. Eghtedari estimates that there are 1.5 million to 2 million Iranian-Americans in the United States, of whom about 10,000-15,000 live in the Portland area. “One of the things [Iranians] bring is family values,” he says, adding that like Americans, Iranians are open about adapting to other

cultural influences.

Of the United States, Eghtedari said, “It’s a global culture and influences many people beyond its borders.” He added that the United States is a champion of the classic liberal political model of open expression and representative government, a model that continues to exert a powerful interest, even in Iran.

For all the differences between Iran and the United States, it is clear

that Eghtedari and Kafoury believe the peoples of both countries have much to learn from each other. When seen in this way, the unlikely connection between Portland and Shiraz does not seem so unlikely after all.

(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. Gravely Concerned About Global Killings of Journalists

By Eric Green
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States remains "gravely concerned" about the intimidation and murders of journalists worldwide, including the October 2006 killing of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya.

In an April 30 statement, the State Department said the United States also is concerned about "increasing limitations on press freedoms around the world."

In many countries, said the department, "governments are tightening libel laws, and media ownership is increasingly controlled by governments and pro-government forces."

In addition, the department said, the number of independent press outlets is declining, while restrictions are multiplying on the use of Internet search engines and the right to free expression on the Internet. The department warned that "those who try to independently seek, receive or disseminate information and ideas are being persecuted."

Politkovskaya's murder, the department said, was an "affront to free and independent media and to democratic values."

Politkovskaya was a "symbol of courage and freedom, who, in the best tradition of journalism and the free press, investigated the most difficult issues, in particular exposing human rights abuses in Chechnya, and dedicated herself to uncovering the truth behind the

story," the department said.

The department said it had been "shocked and profoundly saddened" by Politkovskaya's "brutal murder,"



Samantha White takes part in a 2006 Washington candlelight vigil to honor slain Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya. (AP Images)

and it renewed the U.S. call to the Russian government to continue its investigation "to find, prosecute and bring to justice the perpetrators of this heinous crime."

The department praised Politkovskaya's selection by the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as the 2007 winner of its Guillermo Cano

World Press Freedom Prize.

Cano, director of the Colombian daily newspaper *El Espectador*, was assassinated by two hired killers in December 1986. UNESCO said Cano was a victim of drug trafficking mafias, which he had denounced as damaging Colombian society.

The \$25,000 Cano Prize honors the work of an individual or organization defending or promoting freedom of expression. The naming of Politkovskaya as the 2007 Cano award winner was announced March 30 by Koichiro Matsuura, UNESCO's director-general. A jury of 14 professional journalists and editors worldwide made the selection.

The Cano award is presented annually on May 3, World Press Freedom Day. The 10th anniversary of the award's creation will be commemorated during a May 3-4 conference on press freedom in Medellin, Colombia, Cano's home city. A ceremony during the conference will honor Politkovskaya, with speakers to include UNESCO's Matsuura; Francisco Santos Calderon, Colombia's vice president; and Politkovskaya's son, Ilya Politkovsky.

PRESS FREEDOM DAY ACTIVITIES TO BE HELD WORLDWIDE

Numerous World Press Freedom Day activities are scheduled worldwide.

The State Department's Jonathan Farrar, principal deputy assistant secretary of state in the Bureau of

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Copyright Violations Threaten Cultural Diversity

By Jaroslaw Anders
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington — Music, film and publishing industries from around the world lose billions of dollars annually due to inadequate legal protection of intellectual property, but the real victims might be struggling artists in developing countries, according to international organizations and government anti-piracy agencies.

"Piracy is a cross-border, transnational crime, often run by efficient organized crime groups, some of which even have links to terrorist organizations," a UNESCO report says. Piracy of intellectual property poses challenges that urgently call for international cooperation between industry, governments and law enforcement agencies, the report says.

Copyright protection stimulates creativity by rewarding artists and safeguarding their cultural environment, according to creative industry representatives.

"It is also a key tool for creating incentives for investment in the creation and distribution of cultural materials – and thereby promoting cultural diversity," said Neil Turkewitz, executive vice president of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA).

But, according to an annual report by the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), rampant counterfeiting and piracy problems continue to plague many regions of the world, including large emerging markets like China, Russia, India and Brazil.

The U.S. State Department cites

data that show global losses from piracy of creative works and software reach \$30 billion to \$35 billion per year.

LOCAL INDUSTRIES, ARTISTS ARE PRIMARY VICTIMS OF LAX PROTECTION

Although American cultural products, such as music recordings and



Pirated movies and software discs are gathered for destruction in Nanjing, China, April 14. (AP Images)

movies, are a frequent target, local industries and artists are the primary victims of inadequate law enforcement, industry associations say.

"These losses are not confined to wealthier economies. They are increasingly undercutting the economic performance of local entrepreneurs in developing economies," said Kamil Idris, director-general of the World Intellectual Property Or-

ganization, during the Third Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy in January 2007.

For example, according to the Motion Picture Association of America, U.S. studios lost \$565 million due to copyright piracy in China during 2005. But the Chinese film industry lost more than twice that much, around \$1.5 billion during the same period.

Mexico's long-established, vibrant music industry has been devastated by piracy. The International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA) estimates that 67 percent of all compact discs (CDs) sold in Mexico are believed to be reproduced illegally. As a result, Mexican CD sales plunged by 25 percent between 2002 and 2003, employment in the legitimate recording industry has fallen by nearly half since 2000 and the government is losing more than \$100 million annually in tax revenue, according to the International Chamber of Commerce.

India's film industry clustered in Mumbai, known as "Bollywood," is producing more than 1,000 films per year and quickly is winning audiences around the world. But the U.S.-

India Business Council estimates Bollywood is losing up to 80 percent of its revenues to piracy.

Similar problems are reported by the media and industry associations in Mali, Burma, Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea, Brazil and many other countries. An IIPA report estimates that in some areas pirated goods take up 100 percent of the market, squeezing out legitimate

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Copyright Violations Threaten Cultural Diversity . . .

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production entirely.

UNITED STATES WORKING WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS TO FIGHT PIRACY

The protection of copyrights and other intellectual property is vital to economic growth and global competitiveness, and countries that fail to provide such protection put their own development and global interests at risk, say U.S. and international officials.

"Because we believe so strongly in the value of intellectual property rights and their ability to strengthen economies, the United States is working aggressively to help countries around the world strengthen rights," U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez has said.

The U.S. administration is leading an initiative called STOP – Strategy Targeting Organized Piracy -- to help protect intellectual property at home and abroad. It is posting specially trained prosecutors and FBI agents at American Embassies in Asia, Eastern Europe and other regions, and is working with other nations, the private sector and international organizations to promote strong intellectual property laws.

Several U.S. government agencies, including the U.S. Patent Office, the Copyright Office, the Homeland Security Department, U.S. Trade and Development Agency and the FBI provide a variety of training and technical assistance programs on intellectual property protection for international participants.

In the increasingly knowledge-based

and borderless global economy, the products of the human mind have special social and economic significance and require special care and protection, say U.S. officials and representatives of intellectual property industries. "Encouraging creativity – rewarding the creative, innovative talents on which our world and our future are built – these are the ends which intellectual property serves," WIPO's Idris said.

For additional information, see Protecting Intellectual Property Rights (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/intellectual_property.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. Gravely Concerned About Global Killings of Journalists . . .

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Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, will hold a May 3 webchat about U.S. efforts to support a free press around the world.

In announcing the webchat, the State Department said that free media are "one of the pillars of democracy" and that Farrar's bureau is "committed to supporting and promoting democracy programs throughout the world dealing with press freedom as well as election monitoring, parliamentary development and related issues." Farrar's bureau also devotes a section of its annual Human Rights Report to press freedom.

UNESCO said its Medellin confer-

ence, entitled "Press Freedom, Safety of Journalists and Impunity," will examine the disquieting news that "being a journalist has never been more dangerous."

UNESCO quoted press freedom organizations as saying that 2006 was the bloodiest year on record for journalists, with more than 150 murders and unexplained deaths of journalists and media workers. The numbers in 2007 are not "slowing down," said UNESCO. So far in 2007, some 50 media professionals have been killed, it said.

"Never in recorded history has there been such a large-scale killing of journalists," said UNESCO.

Another session in Medellin will fo-

cus on criminal organizations, corruption and investigative journalism. In many countries journalists do not have the independence needed to uncover corruption and misuse of power and to denounce offenses committed against human rights.

UNESCO also has organized conferences to mark World Press Freedom Day in Amman, Jordan, and in St. Lucia, and will stage a debate in London on the global threats to media freedom.

In St Lucia, Caribbean journalists and representatives of media organizations and training institutions will meet May 2-3 to examine challenges faced by the regional media in defense of freedom of expression. ♦

Intellectual Property Violations Expanding Globally, U.S. Says

Washington – Violations of intellectual property rights (IPR) continue to plague world markets and pose a major challenge to innovators and artists worldwide despite clear improvements by several U.S. trading partners, according to a new U.S. government report.

In the report, released April 30, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) placed 12 countries on its “priority watch list” for failing to protect adequately producers of copyrighted, patented and trademarked materials, such as movies, music and pharmaceuticals.

The list is issued annually as part of USTR’s “Special 301” report to Congress highlighting intellectual property problems facing U.S. companies worldwide.

The “Special 301” report also includes a more extensive watch list of countries where such protection needs further improvement.

As in previous years, Russia and China were at the top of the priority list despite some evidence of improvement in both countries.

Others included in that list were Argentina, Chile, Egypt, India, Israel, Lebanon, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine and Venezuela.

Another 31 countries were placed on the lower-level watch list that does not subject them to the same level of scrutiny as those on the priority list.

“Innovation is the lifeblood of a dynamic economy here in the United States, and around the world. We must defend ideas, inventions and creativity from rip off artists and thieves,” U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab said in a press state-

ment.

USTR cited Russia’s intellectual property problems as related to large-scale production and distribution of optical media and widespread Internet piracy.

Schwab said that in coming months the United States carefully will review whether Russia is meeting its commitments made as part of its accession to the World Trade Organization.

“I know that our Russian colleagues see the value of intellectual property to Russia’s economy and are working hard to deliver on their commitments,” Schwab said. “I urge them to make the most of the coming weeks and months.” Russia, along with Brazil, the Czech Republic and Pakistan, will be subject to an out-of-cycle review, which may result in a change in their Special 301 status before the next annual review in 2008.

With respect to China, the report cites persistently high levels of copyright and trademark violations and mentions the recent U.S. decision to seek consultations under the WTO dispute settlement rules on China’s IPR protection regime. For the first time, the report also includes a special section assessing IPR protection and enforcement at the level of China’s provinces.

Schwab said the United States hopes “to remain constructively engaged with China, building on the recognition of many Chinese officials that their country has its own huge stake in effective IPR protection.”

USTR said Thailand was elevated from the lower level list to the priority list due to “an overall deteriora-

tion in the protection and enforcement of IPR.” It cited that country’s weak legislation on optical disc media, book piracy, cable and signal theft, software piracy and apparel trademark violations as issues that have not been addressed in a meaningful way.

The report recognizes progress achieved by several U.S. trading partners. For example, Brazil and Belize have been moved from the priority list to the watch list. Five U.S. trading partners – Bahamas, Bulgaria, Croatia, the European Union and Latvia – are being removed from the watch lists altogether.

Free trade agreements (FTAs) with the United States are one of the main factors leading to visible improvements in IPR protection, according to the report. The document cited such improvements in the Central American and the Dominican Republic trade agreement (CAFTA) area. It said high IPR protection standards also are part of the most recent and pending FTAs with Colombia, South Korea, Panama and Peru.

For more information, see Protecting Intellectual Property Rights (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/intellectual_property.html).

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

All Countries Can Gain from Globalization, Strong Institutions

Washington -- Even the least developed countries can accelerate growth and poverty reduction by embracing trade and building strong institutions, a U.S. central bank governor says.

Opening domestic markets to foreign goods weakens the political power of entrenched business interests and frees financial resources for investment by reducing corruption, said Frederic Mishkin, a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. He spoke April 26 at the International Monetary Fund in Washington.

Mishkin said that sometimes developing countries prefer to maintain import barriers to protect their nascent industries. But even then, he said, they can generate incentives for institutional reform by removing obstacles to exports. Potential exporters will push for a well-functioning financial system because they need better access to capital to compete in the international arena, Mishkin said.

He said that all countries that have advanced economically in recent decades, such as Japan, South Korea and Chile, have relied on export-led growth.

Mishkin said he finds it surprising that many of the world's poorest countries, particularly in Africa, maintain taxes, restrictions, a fixed official exchange rate and other policies that effectively discourage export-oriented production.

In addition to ending those taxes and policies, governments can encourage exports by providing the transportation infrastructure to

makes it easier for businesses to ship their goods abroad, he said.

Mishkin said, however, that only when nations participate fully in the global trading system can they derive full benefits from it. Lowering barriers to imports forces domestic firms to increase productivity and make better products that in turn help promote exports, he said.

According to empirical evidence, trade liberalization is beneficial to both exporting and importing countries, Mishkin said. Advanced countries can help bring less developed nations into the global trading system by supporting the opening of their markets to goods and services from the developing world, he added.

Emerging-market countries can integrate better with that system by opening financial markets to increase access to capital and lower its costs, he said. In addition, foreign financial firms are likely to increase the pressure on the host government to institute financial system reforms, he added.

But Mishkin cautioned against premature financial market liberalization. Such liberalization must be preceded by a certain degree of institutional and financial market development as well as macroeconomic stability to achieve its goals, he said.

Mishkin said good institutions such as a strong property rights regime and an effective legal system are critical to economic growth.

Developing such institutions is not easy and takes time because they

need to evolve and adapt to local circumstances, he said.

GLOBAL MAJORITY SUPPORTS TRADE

According to a survey made public April 26 by the nonpartisan Chicago Council on Global Affairs and WorldPublicOpinion.org and conducted in cooperation with polling organizations around the world, publics in 17 countries and the Palestinian Territories expressed support for globalization and even greater backing for trade as sources of economic, corporate and consumer benefits. Pro-trade sympathies were strongest in export-oriented nations such as China, South Korea and Israel and weakest in Mexico, Russia and the Philippines, according to the polls.

Many respondents, however, in both developed and emerging-market countries expressed concern about the impact of trade on the environment.

Trade's impact on job creation was viewed as mostly negative in developed countries such as France and the United States and as mostly positive in all other countries. Respondents often were divided on trade's effect on job security, with China as the only country with the majority supporting a view that trade helps job security.

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U.S. Urges More Support for Malaria Prevention, Treatment

By Kathryn McConnell
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- International support for malaria control activities is increasing, with more donor funding, improvements in national health care systems and expanded community group involvement, says the coordinator of the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative (PMI).

PMI is calling on donors to provide long-term support to train more local health care workers about malaria control and to provide anti-malaria supplies, Tim Ziemer told the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health April 25.

Ziemer's testimony marked the first Malaria Awareness Day in the United States. It was held in conjunction with Africa Malaria Day, established April 25, 2000, by leaders of 44 nations attending an African malaria summit.

"There should be an international mandate that no malaria-endemic country will suffer" for lack of essential malaria-fighting commodities such as medicines and mosquito nets, Ziemer said.

He also called on donors and countries where malaria is prevalent to integrate national malaria-control programs into health programs that focus on pregnant women and children and those with HIV/AIDS, the groups most vulnerable to malaria infection.

Established in 2005 with a commit-

ment of \$1.2 billion through 2010, PMI has supported successful indoor insecticide spraying efforts and provided long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets in its first three targeted countries, Angola, Tanzania and Uganda, Ziemer said.

PMI also distributed in those countries highly effective combination



Child with severe malaria anaemia and no other malaria complication.

drug therapies used to treat multidrug-resistant strains of malaria and provided microscopes and diagnostic materials.

The combination therapies are based on artemisinin, a compound that has been used for centuries in China to treat malaria and fever.

PMI expanded in 2007 to include Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda and Senegal and will further expand to include Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali and Zambia in 2008.

The goal of the initiative, led by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other part-

ners, is to reduce by 50 percent malaria-related deaths in all 15 target countries.

Earlier on April 25, at a White House Malaria Awareness Day observance, first lady Laura Bush announced that the Global Business Coalition was joining with PMI to provide 500,000 bed nets to Zambia.

She said the nets "will help mothers sleep soundly at night, knowing that their babies are safe. ... they'll give a country devastated by malaria the promise of good health and renewed hope."

At the observance, President Bush said he would raise the issue of malaria in June when he meets with leaders of the Group of Eight (G8).

The G8 comprises Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Ziemer said partnerships with the private sector, nongovernmental organizations and local faith-based groups are crucial to PMI's approach.

He said PMI already has received \$2 million from the ExxonMobil Foundation to support anti-malaria activities in Angola, including a nationwide malaria indicator survey that will serve as a baseline against which to measure results of malaria-fighting efforts.

Business, particularly the energy sector, is committed to helping find long-term solutions to malaria, said

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Global Community To Boost Developing-Nation Access to Vaccines

By Cheryl Pellerin
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Developing nations are getting help from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the global community to improve their access to vaccines that protect against influenza and possibly against a future flu pandemic.

On April 24, WHO announced that six developing countries – Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Thailand and Vietnam – each will receive grants of about \$2.5 million to establish in-country manufacturing capacity for flu vaccines. Japan provided \$8 million of this money and the United States provided \$10 million.

WHO says it plans to use the rest of the funds – about \$3 million – to help the countries implement their vaccine-production processes.

“Once this production capacity is in place,” said Michael Leavitt, secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in an April 24 statement, “these countries will be able to make seasonal influenza vaccine domestically ... to protect their populations.”

If an influenza pandemic emerges, Leavitt added, the countries “will have the infrastructure in place to convert their production lines to manufacturing pandemic vaccine.”

During an April 25 meeting in Geneva convened by WHO Director-General Margaret Chan, WHO officials and representatives of donor and developing nations, vaccine manufacturers and industry associations discussed mechanisms for acquiring and stockpiling doses of pre-pandemic vaccine.

“I believe that developing countries are right to ask us to address the

tion over the past few months on the fact that developing countries supply H5N1 samples to WHO collaborating centers for analysis and eventual vaccine production but cannot afford the vaccines. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=March&x=20070302164850hmnietsua0.4353907>).)



Children of Cameroon, Africa, with their smallpox vaccination certificates. Photo courtesy CDC; Photo by Robert J. Baldwin

issue of more equitable access now,” Chan said. “At the moment, the threat is still in the future, unpredictable in timing and severity. This is the best time to invest in an insurance policy.”

The meeting followed up on earlier meetings, most recently March 27 in Jakarta, Indonesia, and discussions at the 59th World Health Assembly in 2006.

Indonesia Health Minister Siti Fadilah Supari has focused global atten-

VACCINE PRODUCTION

Welcoming attendees to Geneva, Chan acknowledged that the inequitable distribution of vaccines is due to many factors, including unequal levels of resources and the problem of finite manufacturing capacity.

“For a trivalent pandemic vaccine [containing three different strains of vaccine], annual manufacturing capacity is about 500 million doses,”

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Global Community To Boost Developing-Nation Access to Vaccines . . .

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Chan said. "For a monovalent vaccine [containing one strain], this figure increases to 1.5 billion doses. This is still not enough for a world of well over 6 billion people."

It will take the countries that receive grants three years to five years to begin producing vaccine. Until then, the countries will need support to access vaccines to protect their populations.

"It is imperative that the global community works collectively to ensure more equitable access to a vaccine and other health measures in the event of an influenza pandemic," said Dr. David Heymann, WHO assistant director-general for communicable diseases. "We all have a responsibility to protect global public health security."

The grants help implement the Global Pandemic Influenza Action Plan, which seeks to close a production gap of several billion doses of influenza vaccine.

HUMAN H5N1 VACCINE

In the United States, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the first human vaccine developed to protect against the

highly pathogenic H5N1 avian flu virus.

The vaccine could be used if the H5N1 virus develops the ability to spread easily from person to person, which could cause a rapid spread of the disease worldwide, according to an April 17 FDA statement. If a flu pandemic emerges, the vaccine could offer early limited protection in the months before a vaccine tailored to the pandemic strain could be developed and produced.

"We are working closely with other government agencies, global partners and the vaccine industry," said Dr. Jesse Goodman, director of FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, "to facilitate the development, licensure and availability of needed supplies of safe and effective vaccines to protect against the pandemic threat."

The vaccine comes from a human strain of the virus and is intended to immunize people age 18 through 64 who could be at increased risk of exposure to the H5N1 virus in the vaccine. The vaccine is administered by two intramuscular injections, given about 30 days apart.

The manufacturer, Sanofi Pasteur, will not sell the vaccine commer-

cially. The U.S. government is buying the vaccine for its national stockpile for future distribution by public health officials. The vaccine will be manufactured at Sanofi Pasteur's facility in Pennsylvania.

"In the United States," Leavitt said in an April 24 statement, "we have been making significant investments in vaccine research and development and in expanding influenza vaccine production surge capacity. . . . These investments will likely benefit not only citizens of the United States, but also citizens of the world."

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

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Literacy Initiatives Boost Maternal and Child Health, Say Experts

By Lauren Monsen
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Effective literacy programs that target both adults and children can have profound effects on the health and well-being of families, according to a panel of educators and analysts.

During an April 26 webchat that highlighted regional literacy conferences sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), experts answered questions about initiatives that boost literacy rates around the world. Perri Klass, who participated in a recent UNESCO literacy conference in Qatar, told the webchat audience that such programs offer concrete benefits to parents and their youngsters. Klass, a pediatrician, is medical director of Reach Out and Read, a U.S. literacy program run by children's health care providers.

The doctors, nurses and public health workers who administer Reach Out and Read "give parents advice about how important it is to read to their young children," she said. "We give the child a book to take home at every visit. We start when the children are only 6 months old, and we continue until they are 5 years old and ready to start school."

It is widely recognized that children develop literacy skills long before they learn to read, just as they develop language skills before they begin to speak.

Klass cited the concepts of mother/child literacy and also literacy and health as "very important in the work that we do with young children and their families and with health care workers." Reach Out

and Read encourages parents to read aloud to their children "so that children grow up with books and a love of reading," she explained. "Health care providers ... have a remarkable opportunity to reach parents when their children are very young."



Sonya Dean reads to children at Metro-Health Medical Center, where "Reach Out and Read" originated, July, 2004. (AP Images)

A mother's reading skills often are fundamental to her family's prospects in life, Klass observed. "Improved maternal literacy has a strong positive effect on child health, [because] as family literacy levels improve, parents become more effective users of the health care system," she said.

Reach Out and Read is a rapidly growing program in the United States, operating in 3,289 sites and serving 2.8 million children. The program is being replicated in other countries as well. Although it was developed to fit into the U.S. system of health care delivery, the program has been adapted to work within the health care frameworks of countries ranging from the Philip-

pinas to Italy to Lesotho, said Klass.

Another of the webchat's participants was Anita McBride, chief of staff to U.S. first lady Laura Bush. The UNESCO conferences, she said, will build on the September 2006 White House Conference on Global Literacy and will "help national governments and international partners use proven best practices to teach people of all ages how to read." Six regional literacy conferences will take place over the next two years. "The first successful conference was just held in Doha, Qatar, in March 2007," McBride said. Additional regional literacy conferences will take place in China (July 2007), Mali (September 2007), India (November 2007), Costa Rica (March 2008) and Azerbaijan (May-June 2008), she said.

Russ Whitehurst, director of the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education, said that overall, literacy rates have been improving over the past several years, but some countries still lag behind.

"Since 1990, the number of adult illiterates has fallen by 100 million, but when you break it down into region, the adult illiteracy rate actually increased in some places," said Whitehurst.

However, "when we're talking about children or youth ages 15-24, the picture is much brighter, with marked progress due to expanded access to formal schooling," he said. "The global youth literacy rate increased from 75 percent to 88 percent between 1970 and 2000-2004."

In response to a question, McBride

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U.S. Urges More Support for Malaria Prevention, . . .

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Adel Chaouch, director of social responsibility for Marathon Oil Corp., at the hearing.

He said businesses suffer an estimated \$12 billion in economic losses each year in Africa attributed to malaria, including costs to protect employees from the disease and in lost productivity by employees who become ill or die.

Other major contributors include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, one of the world's largest funders of health activities, and Marathon and Noble Energy, which support a successful malaria-control project in Equatorial Guinea.

PMI works closely with such organizations as the World Health Organization (WHO); the Roll Back Malaria Partnership; Malaria No More; the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; the World Bank

and the United Nations Children's Fund.

Zierner said the United States, working with laboratories in Kenya, Thailand, Indonesia and Peru, is supporting the development of vaccines to protect against malaria. It also is examining the effects of malaria treatments.

A transcript (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/04/20070425-2.html>) of the president's and Laura Bush's remarks is available on the White house web site.

The full text (<http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/zie042507.htm>) of Zierner's prepared remarks is available on the House subcommittee's Web site.

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

Literacy Initiatives Boost Maternal and Child Health, Say Experts . . .

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spoke briefly about the U.N. Literacy Decade, which UNESCO has been organizing and coordinating. "The goal of the U.N. Literacy Decade, which runs from 2003 to 2012, is to help increase literacy worldwide and build commitment from the international community to focus on literacy and education," she said. "Mrs. Bush is very committed to this cause and [to] her role as honorary ambassador for the U.N. Literacy Decade. As a former librarian, she knows how reading can empower people of all ages."

UNESCO is helping countries implement a series of goals under its Education for All initiative, and the U.S. first lady joined UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura

in hosting a January 2007 round table discussion on teacher training and literacy. "Mrs. Bush has also supported efforts to increase textbook distribution and educational access for millions of people around the world," said McBride.

Klass emphasized the fact that widespread literacy is an essential cornerstone of all prosperous societies because countries must depend on an educated and informed citizenry to reach their full potential.

"I can think of nothing more important to world progress than literacy," added Whitehurst.

A transcript (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Archive/2007/Apr/27-987339.html>) of the webchat is available on USINFO's Webchat Station (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/>

<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Products/Webchats.html>), which also has information on previous and upcoming webchats.

More information (<http://www.reachoutandread.org/>) on Reach Out and Read is available on the program's Web site.

More information (http://unesco.usmission.gov/ED_09012006_Education.cfm) on how the United States is working with UNESCO to promote literacy is available on the Web site of the U.S. Mission to UNESCO.

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