



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

“New Opportunity” Now Exists for Reconciliation in Somalia

By Charles W. Corey
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government now has a “new opportunity” to promote peace and reconciliation and bring the communities in Somalia together, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer told the Voice of America November 6.

In an interview with VOA’s Somali Ser-

vice, Frazer said the recent resignation of Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi presents “an important new dynamic in So-



Assistant Secretary of State Jendayi Frazer met with Somali President Ahmed and then Prime Minister Gedi in April. (AP Images)

malia and one that we all have to take very seriously. ... We hope that a very capable person, really someone who can bring the communities together, will be selected” to succeed Gedi.

Asked to comment on Gedi’s resignation, Frazer said: “I think Prime Minister Gedi took a very commendable step, a very honorable step, in that he has removed himself so that someone can

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U.S. Economy Ranks as World’s Most Competitive

Washington -- The U.S. economy has regained its ranking as the world’s most competitive, largely as a result of its efficient markets and corporate innovation, according to a major report.

Following the United States were Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden and Germany in the 2007 edition of The Global Competitiveness Report, published by the World Economic Forum (WEF), an international research and

policy-support group. In 2006, the U.S. economy ranked Number 6 in overall competitiveness.

“The efficiency of the country’s markets, the sophistication of its business community, the impressive capacity for technological innovation that exists within a first-rate system of universities and research centers, all contribute to



U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson

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U.S. Statement on Support for Peace, Security in Eastern Congo

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
November 1, 2007

We welcome the Democratic Republic of Congo Government's recent proposal to eliminate the threat to peace and security posed by remnants of the former Rwandan Armed Forces (ex-FAR) and Interahamwe militia responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. We also welcome the Government of Rwanda's response to the Congolese proposal to disarm and repatriate these forces. In keeping with President Bush's and Secretary Rice's long-standing personal com-

mitment to the achievement of lasting peace and security in the African Great Lakes, we support these efforts.

We encourage the two governments, both of which are partners in the U.S.-Facilitated Tripartite Plus Joint Commission, to continue consulting closely with each other, and with the United Nations Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) on a comprehensive plan to end the violence in eastern Congo. We urge both states to convene immediately the Joint Verification Mechanism to assist in implementing the plan. As

a friend to both countries, we stand ready to facilitate discussions, help with implementation, and support their efforts for the future of the region.

Ex-FAR and Interahamwe leaders must end their military activities and disarm and demobilize their forces. We call on all parties to respect United Nations prohibitions against providing them military or other support.

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U.S. Navy Still Battles Pirates on the High Seas

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Countering piracy, or any other threat, comes naturally to U.S. Navy personnel patrolling critical sea lanes around the world, and October was been a busy month for those monitoring pirate activities off the east coast of Africa.

On October 30, a U.S. Navy destroyer answered a call for help -- relayed through the International Maritime Bureau -- from the North Korean crew on a vessel that had been overtaken by pirates in international waters October 29.

The USS James Williams dispatched a helicopter to the sugar-laden Dai Hong Dan, poised 60 nau-

tical miles off the coast of Somalia, to investigate the situation.

The helicopter confirmed the plight of the ship -- the pirates had taken control of the ship's bridge while the crew was confined to the steering and engineering areas -- and the destroyer headed to the scene. Upon its arrival, the Navy demanded the pirates surrender.

The arrival of U.S. assistance emboldened the North Koreans to take on the pirates, and a gun battle ensued that left two pirates dead and

five captured. Although the North Korean crew regained control of



The cargo vessel Dai Hong Dan sails to Mogadishu, Somalia, after the crew retook the ship from pirates October 30. (U.S. Navy)

their ship, three members were wounded in the fight.

U.S. Navy medics were invited on

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“New Opportunity” Now Exists for Reconciliation . . .

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come in who can bring the communities together. ... We should all applaud the prime minister’s willingness to move aside in the national interest.” She termed it “the right thing to do at the right time.”

Asked what President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and the Somali parliament should do to get a prime minister who will have the confidence of both the president and the international community, Frazer said: “It would be important to have the confidence of the United States and the international community and the parliament, but, most importantly, you need someone who has the confidence of the Somali people. That’s the most important thing,” she stressed, “because, again, this prime minister has to be the key to a national reconciliation.

“We’ve said over and over and over again that Somalia’s future -- a future of stability -- depends on reconciling the various communities, whether they are political communities, ideological, the different clans, civil society groups, intellectuals, religious authorities, all [of those groups] need to come together. So we need a prime minister who can bring those communities together, and that is what the United States is looking for.”

Asked what characteristics would be appropriate for the new prime minister, Frazer said, “That’s going to be President [Abdulahi] Yusuf’s choice.” She quickly added, how-

ever, that “the main characteristic is someone who sees the national interest, someone who is committed to the transitional federal charter and a transition in 2009, someone who has capability, political skill, and certainly someone who can embody that spirit of nationalism that he’s operating and working in the interests of the country as a whole, not in his personal interests or even in his clan’s interest, but in the interest of Somali people.”

When asked about how long it will take before the Somali federal forces can stand on their own, Frazer reminded the interviewer that Somalia has been without a government for more than 16 years. “Now the Transitional Federal Government is trying to put in place the institutions to have a transition to an elected government by 2009. Ethiopian troops have not been there for 16 years. So to blame the Ethiopian troops is a faulty analysis and it takes the responsibility away from Somalis themselves. We hope that Ethiopian troops can leave as soon as possible and that soon as possible is the deployment of AMISOM [African Union Mission to Somalia] forces, and we are trying to get more in. We hope that Burundians will deploy sometime this month.”

Asked what the United States is doing to assist others in providing necessary troops to Somalia, Frazer said: “The Burundians have repeatedly said they want to deploy to Somalia and they are committed to doing so. ... We have provided

about \$19 million so far to try to assist the countries Uganda and Burundi.

“We are training two battalions of Burundians, we’ve procured equipment for those battalions, and we will assist in their deployment. And so we are working with other governments. Secretary Rice has also reached out to Nigerian President [Umaru] Yar’Adua to talk about the deployment of Nigerians, as well as President [John] Kufuor, with Ghanaians. So we are working. We also need to do more with the United Nations and get the United Nations involved,” she said.

For additional details, see a transcript (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=texttrans-eng-lish&y=2007&m=November&x=20071107162650xjsnommis0.8773767>) of Frazer’s interview.

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U.S. Navy Still Battles Pirates on the High . . .

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board to treat the wounded. The North Korean sailors were transferred to the American destroyer for medical treatment and later returned to their vessel. The five surviving pirates were kept under guard on the North Korean ship, which returned to the Somali port of Mogadishu.

A coalition vessel destroyed the two pirate skiffs so they would not be used again for nefarious purposes.

Piracy is an ongoing problem along the Somali coast. Some of the pirates are connected to Somali clans and have been outfitted with sophisticated weapons and tracking equipment.

MARITIME STRATEGY IS KEY TO COUNTERING PIRACY

For the Navy, safeguarding critical sea lanes and reacting to conventional threats such as pirates or terrorists is all part of a day's work. U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Todd Vician told USINFO that countering piracy is just one part of a broader maritime security strategy.

The October 30 incident had bilateral implications. The South Korea press speculated that U.S. assistance to the North Korean crew may contribute to "a growing détente" between North Korea and the United States. A South Korean news agency, Yonhap, said the ship incident likely will help efforts toward normalized U.S.-North Korean diplomatic ties. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill told reporters in Beijing October 31 that he

discussed the pirate incident and the Navy's intercession during talks with his North Korean counterpart on the effort to end the threat of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula.

Navy Commander Lydia Robertson of the U.S. Fifth Fleet in Bahrain

U.S. and coalition forces routinely conduct maritime security operations. Navy Lieutenant Junior Grade Joseph Holstead said such operations are carried out in a manner consistent with international law "to help ensure security and safety in international waters so that all commercial shipping can



A team from the USS James Williams boards the cargo vessel Dai Hong Dan to provide medical aid after a fight with pirates. (U.S. Navy)

told the Associated Press that the Navy's goal is to remove pirates from any transport vessel so "ships can return to legitimate shipping traffic and transit."

A public affairs spokesman with U.S. Central Command said piracy is "a serious international problem that requires an international solution." The Navy, he said, will continue to work with international organizations like the Malaysian-based International Maritime Bureau "to encourage mariners to take necessary precautions to improve their safety and security."

operate freely while transiting the region."

In a separate incident in October, a Panamanian-flagged ship sent out a distress call in the Gulf of Aden. U.S. and coalition forces from Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Pakistan, the United Kingdom and other nations are monitoring the situation.

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Partnership Helps Improve Laboratory Systems in African Nations

By Cheryl Pellerin
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- A public-private collaboration between the U.S. government's global AIDS program and a New Jersey medical device company, launched October 31, aims to improve laboratory systems and services in eight African countries most severely affected by HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis (TB).

Accurate diagnosis is essential for treating and preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS, TB and other diseases, but laboratories in developing countries often lack resources, qualified health workers and access to training for laboratory technicians.

The five-year, \$18 million partnership between the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and Becton, Dickinson and Company (BD) will support



Children take part in the 2006 World AIDS Day ceremony in Cape Town, South Africa. AP/Wide World Photo

training and improved diagnostic capabilities critical to managing HIV/AIDS and TB patients.

"The best way to increase the impact of what we're already doing is not to duplicate efforts but to bring additional resources to work, and that's exactly what we intend to do with this partnership," Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael

Leavitt said during an October 31 press briefing.

"BD's expertise in laboratory diagnostics will help advise programs currently under way," he added, "and [PEPFAR's] coordination and additional funding will help those programs leverage what we'll now bring to the table."

EXTENDING TREATMENT

Under PEPFAR, the largest international health initiative ever undertaken by a single country, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through its Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is the lead agency for strengthening laboratory systems.

BD, a global medical technology company with 28,000 employees in 50 countries, has conducted more than 300 training sessions in 55 developing countries, reaching

3,000 laboratory technicians in collaboration with government health ministries, nongovernmental organizations and U.S. agencies, including CDC.

"Increasingly," said BD Executive Vice President Gary Cohen, "public health and HIV/AIDS leaders have come to recognize that lack of sufficient capacity and capability to provide health services, including labora-

tory testing services, has become the primary barrier to further extending HIV/AIDS treatment access in developing countries."

Activities in the collaboration will be implemented through country-specific programs in Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa, and through short-term tech-

nical assistance to provide training for all levels of service.

In South Africa, for example, the collaboration will help the new regional training laboratory double the training offered to all PEPFAR-supported countries in Africa. This regional laboratory will also expand significantly the number of health care workers trained to provide quality HIV testing.

Expanded counseling and testing efforts will make it possible for more Africans to know their HIV status, benefit from prevention counseling and receive referrals for life-saving treatment. In the first year alone, the public-private partnership will allow PEPFAR to increase laboratory capacity an estimated 15 percent to 20 percent over current levels.

COMPLICATED THERAPIES

Over five years, the partnership will:

- Support country-specific programs to develop integrated laboratory systems and services and improve laboratory quality;

- Improve laboratory diagnostics critical to managing HIV/AIDS patients by training health personnel;

- Implement quality-control and quality-assurance guidelines and supervisory tools for hematology, chemistry, rapid HIV testing;

- Strengthen TB reference laboratories to serve as centralized training facilities; and

- Improve access to TB diagnostics for HIV-positive patients.

"Antiretroviral therapy for HIV/AIDS

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Africa Now at a “Turning Point,” Ugandan President Says

By Charles W. Corey
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Africa stands today at a “turning point” in its history, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni told an audience in Washington October 31.



Ugandan President
Yoweri Museveni

Addressing business executives, investors, diplomats and Africanists, Museveni said, “Africa is breaking old paradigms in order to integrate itself profitably into the global economy and to liberate itself from the charity of strangers. ...

“More and more people are talking about the emerging new Africa and that most African governments are now the product of democratic elections. They are talking about how the region as a whole is enjoying the highest growth rates in 30 years,” he told his audience. “They are talking about the remarkable returns to be had on African investments.”

Museveni was invited to deliver the address, entitled “Building the Financial Infrastructure to Transform Africa,” by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Whitaker Group, a Washington consulting firm that works to advance business in Africa. On October 30, he had met at the White House with President Bush and then on Capitol Hill with senior members of the U.S. Congress.

The Ugandan leader said that the international community is attributing Africa’s higher economic growth

not just to higher commodity prices and other cyclical phenomena.

“There are other less reversible forces at work,” he said, such as improved governmental economic policies and better political governance across the continent.

“There is growing regional stability as conflicts are successfully resolved, thanks to bold initiatives like the African Growth and Opportunity Act,” he said. The act, known as AGOA, is the U.S. initiative that enables products from eligible countries to enter the U.S. market duty-free.

Thanks to initiatives like AGOA, Museveni said, a new market for African products is opening up in the United States. He reaffirmed Africa’s strong support for AGOA, saying trade and not aid is the long-term solution to Africa’s problems.

“Expanded trade and access to markets is essential,” Museveni said, but cautioned that those steps are not the entire solution. Much more needs to be done to empower the people of Africa and their companies to generate wealth and growth, he added, “and to make it much easier and more attractive for outside investors to include Africa in their portfolios.”

People wanting to invest in the United States can choose from a plethora of options, he said, but in Africa an opposite investment climate exists, one limited in scope and only available in a handful of countries.

“Only one in three African countries have an organized securities market,” he said, but added: “This is changing. We are growing, and Uganda is among those in Africa leading the way.”

Uganda began implementing financial reforms in 2003 to bring itself into compliance with international banking and financial standards, Museveni said.

One key element of that process, he said, is full disclosure and transparency, to help bolster investor confidence. “In short, we are now poised ... for the public to invest in a wide range of instruments that are now available on the market,” he said.

Additionally, Uganda and its neighbors are working to create a single monetary and political union in East Africa to help streamline trade and investment throughout the region. The nation also is working to make it easier for Ugandans to access capital and become part of the country’s ever-growing financial network.

“Even the poorest possess assets that can be miniaturized under the right conditions,” he said, and for that reason, they can be worthy of gaining attention from business.

The Ugandan leader closed his remarks on an optimistic note. Although there is much work to be done, he said -- with only one in five adults in sub-Saharan Africa having a bank account -- “there is a new day and a new way in Africa” dawning on the horizon.

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U.S. Economy Ranks as World's Most . . .

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making the United States a highly competitive economy," said economist Xavier Sala-i-Martin, a co-editor of the report.

However, the report warns that macroeconomic imbalances, including current account deficit, and some weaknesses of U.S. institutions "pose a risk to the country's overall competitiveness potential."

In the 2007 edition, 131 countries were ranked on the quality of institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic stability, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods and labor market efficiency, financial market sophistication, technological development, market size, and business sophistication and innovation.

The United States scored high on innovation, labor market efficiency, and higher education and training.

The ranking was based on publicly available data and a survey of more than 11,000 business leaders around the world. The poll pinpointed tax rates and tax regulations as the most problematic areas of the U.S. business environment.

Economist Michael Porter, another co-author of the report, said the index helps governments identify policy areas ripe for improvements and provides motivation for reforms.

Many private-sector and government economists said the resilience the U.S. economy has shown in recent years in the face of many shocks such as the 2001 terrorist attacks, corporate scandals and high oil prices can be attributed to its competitiveness, particularly the openness and flexibility of its financial markets.

In October, U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson said he believes that

with these qualities the U.S. economy will be able to weather another crisis -- the slump in the housing and mortgage markets and the related credit crunch.

His optimism was supported by an October 31 Commerce Department report that said the U.S. economy grew 3.9 percent in the third quarter. The news surprised many market observers, who expected a slower growth rate.

The chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, Edward Lazear, called the growth rate "quite remarkable," in view of the fact that the housing market problems had begun to affect the economy during the third quarter.

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Partnership Helps Improve Laboratory Systems in . . .

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and treatment therapies for tuberculosis, the leading cause of death for people living with AIDS, are not like taking aspirin," Cohen said. "These are complicated therapies that require accurate diagnosis, sophisticated tests for patient monitoring, and other vital health services."

The link between TB and HIV/AIDS is a serious global health problem, and the partnership will focus on improving training materials and practices for diagnosing and managing people living with HIV/AIDS who also have TB.

"TB is important in HIV because it's the leading killer among people who are HIV-positive," said Ambassador Mark Dybul, U.S. global AIDS coordinator. "The link between HIV and TB is something we must tackle."

The partnership, he added, "will allow us to do the types of tests we need to identify drug-resistant tuberculosis, including extremely drug-resistant tuberculosis, which is something that's important not only in sub-Saharan Africa but also to us here at home."

As a first step, Cohen said, BD and PEPFAR will work on the ground

with ministries of health, national reference laboratories and implementing partners to develop or strengthen national laboratory strategic plans for each country.

More information about PEPFAR (<http://www.pepfar.gov/>), the CDC Global AIDS Program (<http://www.cdc.gov/gap>) and BD (<http://www.bd.com/>) is available on the organizations' Web sites.

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Expert To Discuss Women Voters in 2008 U.S. Presidential Election

Women voters have played a crucial role in American presidential elections for years, and 2008 will be no different.

On November 9 at 10 a.m. EST (1500 GMT), join Kellyanne Conway as she discusses the nature and impact of women voters in the United States in the 2008 presidential election.

Conway is the president and chief executive officer of the polling company™ inc., a privately held, woman-owned corporation founded in 1995. One of the most quoted and noted pollsters on the national scene, she was recognized as the most accurate predictor of the 2004 elections, receiving the Washington Post's "Crystal Ball" award. She is co-author of *What Women Really Want: How American Women Are Quietly Erasing Political, Racial, Class, and Religious Lines to Change the Way We Live* (Free Press, 2005). In her 19-year research career, she has advised clients in 46 of the 50 states and

directed hundreds of demographic and attitudinal survey projects for statewide and congressional political races, trade associations and



*Kellyanne Conway
President and Chief Executive Officer of the
Polling Company™ Inc.*

Fortune 100 companies.

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of full names is not required.

If you have participated in one of our previous webchats, use the same e-mail. (You no longer need to enter a password.) You may submit questions in advance.

We accept questions and comments in advance of, and at any time during, the program. You may also e-mail (<mailto:usinfowebchat@state.gov>) questions without registering.

The transcript of this webchat will be available on USINFO's Webchat Station (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Products/Webchats.html>), where information about upcoming webchats is also available.

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Historic Mount Vernon To Host French President Sarkozy

*By Carolee Walker
USINFO Staff Writer*

Washington -- The French connection at Mount Vernon has been strong since the young French hero of the American War of Independence, the Marquis de Lafayette, visited George Washington's Virginia estate.

Today Mount Vernon continues to be a significant meeting place for U.S. presidents and visiting dignitaries. President Bush chose Mount

Vernon as the place to hold meetings with French President Nicolas Sarkozy on November 7 to reaffirm the "deep historical bonds" shared by the two countries, according to the White House.

Bush will welcome Sarkozy for his first visit to Washington as president. After dinner at the White House on November 6, the two leaders will travel to Mount Vernon November 7 to discuss working together to strengthen security and democracy in Afghanistan and pre-

vent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. Talks also are scheduled to include Middle East peace efforts, ending the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan and fostering democratic change in Burma.

"We are most definitely entering a dynamic new era in U.S.-France relations, one that is full of potential and positive energy," said R. Nicholas Burns, U.S. under secretary for political affairs, in remarks in Paris on October 31. "From a

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global perspective, we have no more vital ally on the great issues of our time – climate change, Darfur, Burma, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq – than France.”

The last head of state to join an American president for a meeting at Mount Vernon was the late King Hussein of Jordan, who met with President George H. W. Bush in 1989.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy hosted a state dinner in honor of President Ayub Khan of Pakistan at Mount Vernon.

“We feel a special satisfaction because you are our guest tonight and because we feel that what Mount Vernon stands for is understood by you,” President Kennedy said at the dinner. “Mount Vernon means to us not merely a beautiful home, but it also is, we hope, the symbol of the United States.”

Queen Elizabeth made a ceremonial visit to Mount Vernon in 1991, and Akie Abe, wife of Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe, visited there in April as the guest of Laura Bush, who told the Japanese first lady that Mount Vernon is her “favorite place.”

In time for the historic meeting with President Sarkozy, a Michigan furniture company in crafted and delivered a custom-designed mahogany conference table to Mount Vernon.

“Mount Vernon asked for our assistance in creating a meeting table for visiting dignitaries that was a worthy complement to the estate’s other furniture,” said Jonathan Smith, president of Kindel Furniture Company, which is licensed to pro-

duce furniture with Mount Vernon. “The project took on even more significance when we were told by Mount Vernon that it is scheduled to be used as the meeting table for President Bush and French President Sarkozy.”

More than 100 craftspeople built the Duncan Phyfe mahogany table, which measures 7 meters long and



President George W. Bush and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France raise their glasses in toast Tuesday, Nov. 6, 2007, during dinner in the State Dining Room in the honor of the French leader. White House photo by Chris Greenberg

1 meter wide. Duncan Phyfe (1768-1854), a Scottish-born American furniture maker in the 19th century, was part of a long tradition of woodworking in the United States.

Phyfe also introduced the French Empire style to American furniture makers. Mount Vernon and the White House contain several pieces of Duncan Phyfe furniture.

Kindel Furniture donated the \$30,000 table to Mount Vernon. The company’s craftspeople spent three months designing and building the table, using a 24-step hand-rubbed finishing process.

“Because our furniture is so labor intensive, literally 100 of our em-

ployees can say they worked on a table that was fit for our president,” Smith said.

Additional information ([http://www.mountvernon.org/search/index.cfm/fuseaction/show_SectionResults/SectionID/11/Keyword/marquis de lafayette/SearchOption/Any/section_table_id/1/](http://www.mountvernon.org/search/index.cfm/fuseaction/show_SectionResults/SectionID/11/Keyword/marquis%20de%20lafayette/SearchOption/Any/section_table_id/1/))

sub_id_section/1) about George Washington’s historic birthplace, including a traveling exhibition (<http://www.mountvernon.org/pressroom/index.cfm/fuseaction/view/pid/984>) on George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette, is available on the Mount Vernon Web site.

The full text (<http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2007/94559.htm>) of Burns’ remarks is available on the State Department Web site.

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Bush Applauds Recipients of 2007 Presidential Medal of Freedom

*By Lauren Monsen
USINFO Staff Writer*

Washington -- President Bush honored the recipients of the 2007 Presidential Medal of Freedom at a White House ceremony November 5, noting that each of the eight recipients "came to this distinction by very different paths."



President George W. Bush awards the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf during a ceremony Monday, Nov. 5, 2007, in the East Room. "When free elections returned to Liberia, the voters made history," said President Bush. "They chose her to be the first woman ever elected to lead a nation on the continent of Africa." White House photo by Eric Draper

The Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award that a U.S. president can bestow, "is designed to recognize great contributions to national security, the cause of peace and freedom, science, the arts, literature, and many other fields," said Bush.

One of the honorees, Gary Becker, won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics in 1992. He is a leading exponent of the study of human capital (which explores how environment, education and personal habits can help predict success or failure), and has written about the economic aspects of racial discrimi-

nation, crime, family organization and drug addiction.

Becker's writings have "proved him to be a thinker of originality and clarity," said the president. "Dr. Becker has shown that economic principles ... [can] help to explain human behavior in fields well beyond economics."

Another honoree, Cuban human rights activist Oscar Elias Biscet, is a physician who has been imprisoned by Cuban dictator Fidel Castro since 2003. Biscet is also the founder of the Lawton Foundation, a nongovernmental organization established in 1997 that defends human rights and denounces violations in Cuba and elsewhere.

"Dr. Biscet is not with us today because he is a political prisoner of the regime in Havana," Bush said. "For speaking the truth, Dr. Biscet has endured repeated harassment, beatings and detentions. The international community agrees that Dr.

Biscet's imprisonment is unjust, yet the [Castro] regime has refused every call for his release." Biscet's son accepted the award on his father's behalf at the White House ceremony.

Bush called medal recipient Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, president of Liberia, another strong voice for democracy and human rights. When a corrupt cabal seized power in Liberia and plunged the country into civil war, "Ellen Johnson Sirleaf stood up for the rights of her fellow citizens," said Bush. "She never wavered, even though the consequences were house arrest, foreign exile, death threats and imprisonment."

Then, "when free elections returned to Liberia, the voters made history," he added. "They chose her to be the first woman ever elected to lead a nation on the continent of Africa."

A fourth medal recipient, scientist Francis Collins, is director of the National Human Genome Research Institute. Charged with the ambitious task of mapping the entire human genome, he led the project "to full and thrilling success," said Bush. "With genetic mapping, researchers know more than ever before about the hereditary influences behind cancer, and heart disease, and diabetes, and many other conditions. And that understanding holds the key to earlier detection of illness, individualized treatments, and even lifesaving cures."

Medal recipient Benjamin Hooks, a civil rights activist, grew up in the segregated South and served in the U.S. Army during World War II. After his wartime service, he earned a law degree, became an ordained minister and devoted himself to

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Bush Says Turkey, U.S. To Expand Effort on Kurdish Terror Group

*By David McKeeby
USINFO Staff Writer*

Washington -- President Bush pledged to increase U.S. intelligence-sharing and security cooperation with Turkey to confront terrorists from the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), following a recent deadly series of PKK cross-border attacks from northern Iraq.

"The PKK is a terrorist organization. They're an enemy of Turkey, they're an enemy of Iraq and they're an enemy of the United States," Bush told reporters following his November 5 Oval Office meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Since the early 1980s, the PKK has been operating from strongholds in a mountainous border region of southeastern Turkey, where it has waged a terrorist campaign to carve out a Kurdish state. More than 37,000 military personnel, police and civilians have been killed in the long-running conflict with the group, which the United States identifies as a terrorist organization.

The latest series of PKK cross-border attacks began in October and largely has targeted Turkish army and police units, killing 35 soldiers and 15 civilians. The attacks also have prompted calls for action from across Turkey, including threats of possible economic sanctions against Iraq or even Turkish military strikes if Iraq fails to curb the PKK's cross-border attacks.

On October 17, the Turkish parliament voted overwhelmingly in support of a military strike in northern Iraq, and Turkish political and military leaders have stated that deci-

sions would hinge on the outcome of the meeting between Bush and Erdogan.

U.S. officials have been working intensively to bring its allies in Tur-

ference, a gathering of diplomats from across the Middle East, as well as representatives from the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the European Union, the United Nations and



President George W. Bush meets with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey Monday, Nov. 5, 2007, in the Oval Office. White House photo by Joyce N. Boghosian

key and Iraq together against the PKK to avoid further military action, which could destabilize the delicate security balance in northern Iraq and the wider region. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=October&x=20071023112915idybeekcm0.3157923>).

The meeting between Bush and Erdogan followed November 2 talks in the Turkish capital, Ankara, among Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her Turkish and Iraqi counterparts to "redouble" counterterrorism cooperation and prevent future PKK attacks into southeastern Turkey. The conversation continued in Istanbul, Turkey, November 3, on the sidelines of the Iraq Neighbors Con-

ference, a gathering of diplomats from across the Middle East, as well as representatives from the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the European Union, the United Nations and

ference, a gathering of diplomats from across the Middle East, as well as representatives from the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the European Union, the United Nations and

"It is important to work jointly and in solidarity with our strategic partner the United States," Erdogan said, citing close U.S.-Turkish cooperation on Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as diplomatic initiatives to pro-

The Way Forward in Iraq - Successes and Challenges

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

(Fort Jackson, South Carolina)

November 2, 2007

President Bush Says "Return On Success" Plan Is Putting Us On The Right Track To Win In Iraq

Today, President Bush gave an update to soldiers at Fort Jackson, S.C., on his September "Return on Success" speech and discussed some of the results of America's new strategy to win the fight in Iraq. Our new strategy in Iraq, including a surge in U.S. forces, has been fully operational for four months. This new strategy emphasizes securing the Iraqi population as the foundation for all other progress in the country; recognizes that once Iraqis feel safe they can begin to create jobs and opportunities; and builds on the idea that improvements in security will help the Iraqis achieve national reconciliation. The President discussed challenges and successes we are seeing in each of these areas.

-- Our strategy in Iraq is guided by the principle of "return on success" -- and as we are seeing more success in Iraq, we are slowly beginning to bring some of our forces home.

-- By taking the fight to the enemy in Iraq, we will defeat the terrorists there so we do not have to face them here at home. In Iraq, a democratic ally has been fighting for its survival. In addition, our enemies have sought to build safe havens there to plot attacks against our people.

Securing The Iraqi Population As The Foundation For All Other Progress In The Country

Successes:

-- We have sent our forces into neighborhoods where Iraqis live to root out the extremists and gain the trust and confidence of the people -- and we are seeing encouraging results.

Since the surge of operations began in June, the number of IED attacks per week has declined by half.

U.S. military deaths have fallen to their lowest level in 19 months.

One year ago, Anbar was thought lost to the enemy. At the time, al Qaeda staged a parade in the city streets to flaunt its control. Last week, there was another parade in Anbar, only this time it was a parade of Iraqi citizens and Iraqi forces, who had reclaimed their homes and driven the terrorists out.

Iraqi forces now have assumed responsibility for security in eight of 18 Iraqi provinces.

Across the country, brave Iraqis are increasingly taking on responsibility for their own safety and security.

-- Our enemies see the changes underway and increasingly fear they are on the wrong side of events. Day by day, our forces are seizing the initiative from the enemy.

Osama bin Laden, who is in hiding out of fear of U.S. forces, has publicly expressed concern about al Qaeda's recent setback in Iraq. In an audiotape, he talks about the "mistakes" that al Qaeda has made, urges the terrorists to overcome what he says are growing divisions in their ranks.

-- The return on our success means that we are slowly beginning to bring some of our forces home -- and we are doing it from a position of strength. The military did not replace 2,200 Marines who came home from Anbar Province in September, and we will also bring home an Army combat brigade for a total force reduction of 5,700 troops by Christmas.

Remaining Challenges:

Parts of Iraq continue to be violent and difficult.

The terrorists are still capable of carrying out attacks that will dominate headlines.

Iraqi Security Forces require continued U.S. support.

Bringing Economic Improvements With Improvements In Security

Successes

With improvements in security, we are also seeing improvements in important economic indicators.

Inflation has been cut in half since last year.

Electricity production in September reached its highest levels since the war began -- and is higher than it was under Saddam.

When Iraqis do not have to fear the terrorists, they can build a better life for themselves.

In Baqubah, the historic market has been reopened in a city that had been in a virtual lockdown a few months ago.

In Fallujah, workers have turned an

(Continued on page 18)

Aid Programs Show U.S. Commitment to Palestinians

By David I. McKeeby
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- When more than 700,000 Palestinians were displaced following the 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli War, the United States was among the first countries to help feed and shelter them, beginning a journey together over the past half-century culminating in the road map for Middle East peace.

Today, "the United States continues to work closely with the Israelis and Palestinians to realize President Bush's vision of two states living side by side in peace and security," Micaela Schweitzer-Bluhm, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem, told USINFO.

Despite historical U.S. differences with the Palestinian Liberation Organization and current U.S. concerns with Hamas, the United States has been the single largest aid contributor to the 4.3 million Palestinians. Palestinians are the largest per capita recipients of foreign aid worldwide from all sources, according to the Congressional Research Service and the U.S. Institute of Peace. Today, Palestinians reside across the region in the West Bank and Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

The United States remains the largest single-nation contributor to the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which was established in 1950 to address the Palestinian's plight. The United States has provided more than \$3 billion in UNRWA donations from 1950 through 2007, and contributed millions more responding to emergency funding appeals over the years. It is also the single largest contributor to the U.N. World Food Programme, providing millions of tons of food

assistance for distribution by private nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to thousands of Palestinians living in communities other than those served by UNRWA.

As part of its greater diplomatic engagement in Mideast peace, the United States expanded aid to the Palestinians by funding new humanitarian aid and infrastructure projects, including children's health programs and clinics, new roads, schools and water systems. The efforts are part of what in 1974 then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger called "an investment in peace" that contributed to the 1979 Camp David agreements between Israel and Egypt.

"To some extent, U.S. aid to the Palestinians was an incentive for the Palestinians to even consider entering into negotiations with Israel," Haim Malka, a research fellow with the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies told USINFO. "Aid has always been an important consideration in bringing conflicting parties together."

With over three decades of relative peace, Schweitzer-Bluhm calls these aid programs, "a tremendous return on our original investment."

With the creation of the Palestinian Authority and its recognition of Israel and renunciation of violence in the 1993 Oslo Accords, the United States accelerated its support of the Palestinian people yet again, with \$1.9 billion in assistance to date -- the largest single-country donor, second in donations only to the European Union.

However, continuing violence and resulting border closures have disrupted the flow of workers and re-

gional trade and worsened living conditions for many families in the Palestinian Territories.

As a result, nearly half of Palestinians live in poverty today and a quarter of the population is unemployed, making U.S.-sponsored programs more vital than ever.

This additional bilateral economic assistance -- an average of \$85 million per year -- is delivered from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) through private companies and NGOs working in region.

Assistance to the Gaza Strip has been limited to humanitarian aid deliveries through international NGOs, a move which Malka criticized as fostering a perception that the United States seeks to divide the Palestinians rather than assist them in building a better future.

"There's no question that the U.S. should not fund a Palestinian Authority that is dominated by Hamas, but on the other hand, I think we have to figure out a way to support all the Palestinian people rather than a limited segment of the population," Malka said.

But officials note that the departure of Hamas from the government also has opened new opportunities on the West Bank, where U.S. assistance also provides educational and economic opportunities, infrastructure and projects to build democratic governance that are the foundation of a "two-state solution."

"Secretary [Condoleezza] Rice is consulting closely with [Palestinian] President [Mahmoud] Abbas and [Israeli] Prime Minister [Ehud] Olmert as they engage in ongoing dis-

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Partnership Based on "Common Vision" Sought for Middle East

By Nino Kader
USINFO Special Correspondent

Washington -- "Success in the Middle East will be measured by whether we are able to achieve partnership with people in the region based on a common vision," a top State Department official told the 16th annual Arab-U.S. Policy-makers Conference in late October.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Lawrence E. Butler commended the work of



Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Lawrence E. Butler

the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, the sponsor of the conference, and other like-minded groups for "forging strong bonds between our peoples, our governments and our companies."

Educating the American people about the Arab world "is not easy when the headlines and newscasts shout about the unrest, the violence and the extremism," he said.

Hussein Hassouna, the League of Arab States' ambassador to the United States, said the media play an increasingly crucial role in shaping public opinion in the Arab world and the United States. There is a tendency by some media outlets to generalize all Arabs as extremists

even though the violence people see on television does "not represent the mainstream of the Arab world," he said.

Countries in the Arab world seek "to maintain and develop friendly relations" with the United States, said Hassouna, "based on common interests and mutual respect." There is a long history of relations between the United States and the Arab world, said one attendee of the conference, who noted that an Arab country, Morocco, was the first nation, in 1777, to seek diplomatic relations with the fledgling United States.

"U.S. policy in the region is broad and multifaceted," Butler said in his keynote address, adding that the United States has "a vital and enduring national interest in the Middle East."

"The goal," according to Butler, "is a secure, peaceful region," that is rooted in what President Bush has called non-negotiable demands of human dignity -- "the rule of law, limits of state power, freedom of speech, religious liberty, equal justice, property rights, tolerance of difference and respect for women." This formula "will defeat the ideology of violent extremism," said Butler.

Butler also discussed Iraq, Iran and the Israeli Palestinian peace process. In Iraq, he said, local governments are making progress and are providing services such as electricity and safe drinking water.

IRAQ, IRAN

Regarding the challenges the United States still is facing in Iraq, the United States is "disappointed with reconciliation efforts at the national level" and the Iraqi government has

yet to pass "modern hydrocarbon legislation that features an equitable sharing of [oil] revenue," he said. Butler said "companies from outside Iraq ... incur significant political and legal risk if they sign any contracts with any party inside Iraq without the passing of a national oil law." Such contracts have, "needlessly elevated tensions among groups," he added.

The Arab world supports a unified Iraq and is willing to help with national reconciliation efforts, said Hassouna, and expressed concern about potential partitioning of the country.

Butler reiterated the Bush administration's position on the situation: "We are committed to an Iraq with a strong federal system, with good central government and with strong decentralized provinces."

The official said the United States is pursuing two tracks on Iran. "The policy of Iran constitutes perhaps the single greatest challenge" across the Middle East today, he said. "We are committed to a diplomatic solution," he stressed but, "the Iranian regime must change course." A "generous offer" is available to assist Tehran in its development of a "peaceful civilian nuclear energy program," if Iran suspends its uranium enrichment activity, he said.

The second track is to increase pressure on Iran, Butler said. In addition to economic sanctions, he spoke of efforts to discourage multinational companies from doing "business as usual" with Iran and listed a number of companies that already have pulled out of Iran, including HSBC, Deutsche Bank and Credit Suisse. Additionally, he said, the United States is enhancing the

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Improved U.S.-Arab Relations Hinge on Security, Prosperity

By Nino Kadar
USINFO Special Correspondent

Washington -- Officials, diplomats and policy advisers gathered in Washington in late October to examine ways to improve relations between the United States and the Arab world.

"We are beneficiaries of Judeo-Christian AND Islamic cultures," said John Duke Anthony at the 16th annual Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conference sponsored by the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations and the U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Corporate Cooperation Committee.

Anthony, president of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, cited during his welcoming remarks the historic Ramadan resolution passed by the U.S. Congress recently by a vote of 376 to 0 as one example of progress in mutual understanding.

The resolution declared, "during this time of conflict ... the House of Representatives recognizes the Islamic faith as one of the great religions of the world," and went on to say, "the House of Representatives acknowledges the onset of Ramadan and expresses its deepest respect to Muslims in the United States and throughout the world on this significant occasion

SECURITY

Lieutenant General Martin E. Dempsey, deputy commander of the U.S. Central Command, addressed the common desire among the nations in the region for stability. The United States provides security assistance in a number of ways as part of "building partner capability," Dempsey said. The first challenge is getting the

U.S. and Arab governments to agree on defining the actual threat to stability, according to the general. The next challenge, he said, is reaching consensus on a course of action to address that threat.

Plans for infrastructure, manpower or equipment must be sustainable, he said, adding that stability in countries like Iraq could be enhanced by looking for "areas of interdependence" among the various groups. Two obvious areas, he said, are "oil revenues and security."

Anthony Cordesman, from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, discussed the fundamental shift away from conventional threats to asymmetric warfare such as terrorism and insurgency that exists today. The threat, he said, "spans the spectrum from sabotage to the use of weapons of mass destruction." There is "basically no conventional threat" from this region, he said. Challenges are different in each country, he said, but the key priority for governments in the region is in maintaining "internal stability."

A "fundamental change" is required from governments, he said, in which they shift their attention to counterinsurgency and counterterrorism activities. He noted that governments routinely assign these issues a higher priority than conventional warfare, but their actions often do not reflect this ranking.

To accommodate the change in threat, Cordesman said, the United States and its regional allies need to increase security cooperation as a way to secure peace rather than a preparation for war. The keys for success, according to Cordesman, lie in "maintaining and expanding peace arrangements and helping with issues of inner stability."

For security cooperation to develop fully, he said, policymakers need to develop "common netting, common information systems, integrated secure communications and forces trained to use them."

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

During a discussion of development dynamics, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) for Europe and the Middle East Shaun Donnelly outlined how USTR is working to "promote economic development and liberalization by focusing on the issues of trade and investment."

Donnelly said the Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) initiative, initially introduced in 2003, seeks to create a free trade area in the Middle East based on common standards and to encourage trade "within the region."

According to the USTR Web site, "A key element of the initiative is to establish a Middle East Free Trade Area by 2013. That vision is beginning to take shape through U.S. free trade agreements with Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Bahrain and Oman, and Saudi Arabia's entry into the World Trade Organization."

Donnelly said the United States also is working to support accession to the World Trade Organization by Lebanon, Algeria and Yemen. This requires strengthening the rule of law in these countries to, "protect property rights [including intellectual property], and create a foundation for openness and economic growth," he said.

Odeh Aburdene, who runs a private equity consulting firm, said that the Arab world needs more entrepreneurs, risk-taking and innovation to spur economic development.

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U.S. Statement on the Democratic Process in Pakistan

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
November 3, 2007

Statement by Sean McCormack,
Spokesman

Pakistan

The United States is deeply disturbed by reports that Pakistani President Musharraf has taken extra-constitutional actions and has imposed a state of emergency. A state of emergency would be a

sharp setback for Pakistani democracy and takes Pakistan off the path toward civilian rule. President Musharraf has stated repeatedly that he will step down as Chief of Army Staff before re-taking the presidential oath of office and has promised to hold elections by January 15th. We expect him to uphold these commitments and urge him to do so immediately.

The United States stand with the people of Pakistan in supporting a democratic process and in counter-

ing violent extremism. We urge all parties to work together to complete the transition to democracy and civilian rule without violence or delay.

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

Political Dialogue Only Solution to Burma's Problems, Envoy Says

The following article by Mark Lagon, director of the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, first appeared in the Wall Street Journal Asia November 2 and is in the public domain. There are no republication restrictions.

The Burmese Junta's Hidden Victims

Mark P. Lagon, Director, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

The Wall Street Journal Asia
November 2, 2007

The startling images of fearless saffron-robed monks in the streets of Rangoon and the violent crackdown that followed exposed Burma to world scrutiny. What we don't see behind these images is the desperation of the Burmese people whose freedom and livelihoods have been drastically curtailed under the repressive regime. Many of these people face literal enslavement at home and extreme exploitation in neighboring countries. They are vic-

tims of human trafficking, a phenomenon that destabilizes the region and bleeds trauma far beyond Burma's borders.

Burma's ruling generals systematically employ forced labor to maintain their repressive grip on the country. The regime forces men, women and children to work for its benefit -- providing rice to feed the huge parasitic military force, constructing roads and buildings, and serving as porters for military convoys and human mine sweepers in the battlefields in the border regions. As the regime continues its gross mismanagement of the country and economic and social conditions deteriorate further, the number of victims of trafficking can only be expected to grow.

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has reported to the U.N. General Assembly that the Burmese military conscripts children into the army. Although the regime prevents an accurate assessment of the magnitude of this problem,

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Map of Burma

Iran Must Disclose Its Nuclear Activities

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The European Union, Russia, China and the United States recently reaffirmed a two-track approach to curbing Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions and are offering negotiations conditioned on Iran's suspension of enrichment and re-processing activities.

If Iran does not suspend its activities, then it faces additional sanctions, a senior U.S. envoy says.

This follows the October 25 announcement by the United States that it was imposing new sanctions against Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and three Iranian state-owned banks. The guard and the affiliated Quds Force were singled out for their support of proliferation and terrorism. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=October&x=20071025150145idybeekcm0.1545221>).

The sanctions were imposed in an effort to strengthen diplomacy, according to Greg Schulte, U.S. ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Schulte told an audience at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute October 30 that Iran's leaders still have the opportunity to open their nuclear activities to full scrutiny.

Full disclosure and the verified suspension of all enrichment activities

are necessary, Schulte said. He also underlined the international community's expectation that Iran will start implementing all measures under the additional protocol to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that it signed and will honor the terms of the IAEA Nuclear Safeguards Agreement.

With the approach of the IAEA November 22 board meeting, Schulte said Iran must answer lingering questions about past and present nuclear activities. Iran can foster international confidence that its activities are peaceful, he said, by explaining what kind of assistance it sought and received from the A.Q. Khan network. Pertinent questions awaiting answers include why Iran possesses a document relevant only to the process of "fabricating uranium hemispheres for a nuclear weapon."

Schulte said the U.N. Security Council needs to pursue more sanctions against Iran. He added the United States is encouraged that other partners, including the European Union, are examining what further measures might be taken -- including sanctions -- in support of collective international diplomacy.

The full text (<http://vienna.usmission.gov/>) of Schulte's remarks is available on the Web site of the U.S. Mission in Vienna.

For additional information, see Arms Control and Non-Proliferation

(http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/arms_control.html).

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U.S. ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Gregory Schulte (Dieter Nagl/AFP/Getty Images)

The Way Forward in Iraq - Successes and . . .

(Continued from page 12)

artillery factory into a civilian machine shop employing 600 people.

In the Baghdad neighborhood of Ameriya, an al Qaeda stronghold until a few months ago, locals have returned and are reopening their shops.

In Arab Jabour, another former al Qaeda stronghold, a local butcher said that as recently as last June he was selling only one or two sheep per week. Now, with the terrorists cleaned out and residents returning home, he is selling one or two sheep per day.

Remaining Challenges

Corruption remains a serious problem.

Unemployment remains high. Improvements we are seeing in the Iraqi economy are not uniform.

Improving Security To Help The Iraqis Achieve National Reconciliation

Successes

-- Reconciliation is taking place at the local level. Many Iraqis are seeing growing cooperation between Shia and Sunnis – who are tired of al Qaeda and Iranian-backed extremists, weary of fighting, and determined to give their families a better life.

In one of the most divided neighborhoods in Baghdad, Sunni and Shia leaders recently signed an agreement to halt sectarian violence and end attacks on Coalition forces.

In Anbar, Sunni sheikhs hosted Shia sheikhs from Karbala province to discuss security and express their unity, an event that would have been unthinkable only a year ago.

In Diyala Province, tribal groups came together for the first time to foster reconciliation.

Remaining Challenges

-- Reconciliation at the national level has not been what we hoped.

While the central government has passed a budget, reached out to its neighbors, and begun to share oil revenues with the provinces, the Iraqi parliament still lags in passing key legislation.

Political factions are still failing to make necessary compromises.

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Partnership Based on “Common Vision” Sought for . . .

(Continued from page 14)

defensive capabilities of Gulf states to secure peace and stability in the region.

"The Iranian government must understand the cost of their behavior," Butler said, adding he was disturbed by the increasing Iranian penetration into radical Palestinian groups.

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

On the issue of Israeli-Palestinian peace, Butler said, "We have re-energized our engagement in this region."

"Israelis need security, while the Palestinians need a viable independent state and an end to the occupation that started in 1967," he said. This position is echoed by the Arab League, said Hassouna, who also called for the cessation of all Israeli settlement activities in order to establish the right climate for peace in the region.

The Palestinian struggle takes place in the context of a larger battle throughout the Middle East of "extremists versus moderates," said Butler. "Our concern is growing that without a serious political prospect for the Palestinians," we will lose the possibility for a two-state solution. He warned that if

that happens, "we will see the further radicalization of Palestinian politics and of politics in the region."

The nonprofit National Council on U.S.-Arab relations, founded in 1983, is dedicated to "improving American knowledge and understanding of the Arab world" and seeks to strengthen and expand "strategic, economic, political, commercial and defense cooperation ties."

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

Pakistan's Musharraf Urged To Hold Elections, Shed Uniform Soon

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Pakistan's president, General Pervez Musharraf, should lift the state of emergency in the country and hold elections as soon as possible, President Bush and other administration officials say.

During a November 5 meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Bush praised Pakistan's leader as "a strong fighter against extremists and radicals" who understands the dangers posed by both, since he has been an assassination target multiple times.

"Our hope is that he [Musharraf] will restore democracy as quickly as possible," Bush said. Erdogan said he would offer the same advice to Musharraf.

The United States government has been monitoring closely a fluid situation in Pakistan since Musharraf declared a state of emergency November 3. Under the emergency decree, Musharraf has jailed opposition leaders, restricted the media and let go a number of Supreme Court judges. His October 6 reelection is under review by that court.

Earlier in the day, Bush directed Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to convey U.S. concerns via telephone to Pakistan's president, as well as the expectation that Musharraf would honor previous pledges to shed his military uniform.

On previous occasions, Rice has conveyed the U.S. view that Pakistan, in large part under Musharraf's leadership, has "made great strides" on press freedoms and civil society development, and these gains need to be protected.

During her trip to Israel and the Palestinian Territories, Rice said the United States does not support extra-constitutional measures that take Pakistan "away from the path of democracy and civilian rule."

Musharraf's decision now "sets Pakistan back in terms of the considerable progress that it had made along the road to democratic change," she said.

The secretary said it is in Pakistan's best interest for a prompt return to the constitutional course and "affirmation that elections will be held for a new parliament, and, for all parties to act with restraint in what is obviously a very difficult situation." Her comments followed indications from the Pakistan government that the schedule for national elections could slide by as much as a year.

Rice said the United States has been a proponent of a democratic path for Pakistan, and the current emergency "is a setback for what we had hoped would be ... a continuous and smooth movement to ... civilian rule."

Musharraf should stop wearing his military uniform as he has promised previously, Rice added. "That would be an important step."

U.S. Representative to the United Nations Zalmay Khalilzad reiterated the United States' stance on Musharraf's actions.

"We oppose what has happened there," he said November 5. "It goes against the expectation of the people Pakistan and the world, the move towards a democratization, toward a free and fair election. ...

And we are very concerned and disturbed by what has happened."

During a trip to China, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates told reporters November 5 that the United



Police officers arrest a lawyer outside the Lahore High Court in Lahore, Pakistan, November 6. (AP Images)

States wants to see Musharraf return Pakistan to "law-based, constitutional and democratic rule as soon as possible."

Although Pakistan remains a key strategic partner of the United States, Gates said the actions taken by Pakistan in the immediate aftermath of Musharraf's declaration were disturbing.

The defense secretary said U.S. officials would review assistance programs, but would be "mindful not to do anything that would undermine ongoing counterterrorism efforts."

U.S.-PAKISTAN DEFENSE TALKS POSTPONED

Given the uncertain political situation in Pakistan, the United States postponed a bilateral defense consultative meeting that was scheduled for November 6-7 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Gates' press secretary said the an-

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Political Dialogue Only Solution to Burma's Problems, . . .

(Continued from page 16)

many believe that Burma has the largest number of child soldiers in the world. Burma holds another notorious distinction: The International Labor Organization considers Burma to harbor a significant share of the estimated 2.2 million victims of state-imposed forced labor globally.

Facing bleak economic conditions and the prospect of forced labor at home, millions of Burmese have had to flee their homes and villages, usually without legal documents, making them even more vulnerable to human trafficking and the predations of corrupt officials.

Among these most vulnerable are girls and women from Burma's ethnic minorities, who reside in the horseshoe of mountainous regions surrounding Burma's flat heartland bordering China, India, Bangladesh and Thailand. Rape is widespread in Burma. Shan, Karen, Chin, Mon and other ethnic minority women and girls live in daily fear of sexual violence by their military oppressors, including as sex slaves in military camps in their regions. Their communities are powerless to protect them and so they flee.

After successfully escaping slavery in Burma, however, another cruel fate awaits too many Burmese. Instead of laying claim to the freedom and economic security they hoped for, they are preyed upon by traffickers and exploitative employers. They are pushed into the sex trade or into highly predatory economic sectors in neighboring countries. Some Kachin, Shan and Burman girls and women enter the sex trade in China and other neighboring countries. International Labor Organization research conducted in 2006 suggests that many of the estimated two million Burmese migrant workers in Thailand work under exploitative conditions.

The United Nations Protocol on Trafficking in Persons calls on governments to protect foreign victims of trafficking, including legal alternatives to deportation to countries where they face hardship or retribution. Greater government efforts need to be made to protect this highly vulnerable group of victims.

The only solution to address the underlying problems behind Burma's crisis is a genuine political dialogue between the regime and the Burmese people, leading to a transition to a government truly representa-

tive of the diverse Burmese population. The U.S. has intensified its financial sanctions targeting Burmese junta leaders. The international community is urging the regime to immediately and unconditionally release those detained for peaceful activism and to fully cooperate with U.N. Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari.

Regional leaders must recognize that the junta's iron rule, marked by night-time raids, detained political prisoners, slave-like conditions of Burmese at home and degradation in neighboring states are indicative of a rotten core -- and can no longer be dismissed as just "an internal matter."

(Mark P. Lagon is American Ambassador-at-large against human trafficking and Director of the U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.)

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

Pakistan's Musharraf Urged To Hold Elections, . . .

(Continued from page 19)

nual meeting would be rescheduled as soon as conditions are more conducive for talks. Important bilateral meetings, Geoff Morrell said, "require an atmosphere where the issues can be addressed with the full attention of all participants."

Musharraf has said he needed extra power to fight a rising threat

from those associated with al-Qaida and the Taliban, although press reports tie his decision to a pending Supreme Court announcement on his decision to remain in place beyond his current term.

In a November 3 statement, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said Musharraf has often said he would "step down as Chief of [the] Army Staff before retaking the presidential oath of

office and has promised to hold elections by January 15." McCormack urged all Pakistani parties "to work together to complete the transition to democracy and civilian rule without violence or delay."

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Aid Programs Show U.S. Commitment to . . .

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cussions to accelerate the work toward the establishment of a Palestinian state," Schweitzer-Bluhm said.

Since May 2006, USAID has worked with Palestinian officials to deliver more than \$3.9 million in emergency medical assistance, including essential medicines, generators and other needed goods, to Palestinian NGO-run clinics and hospitals.

Hanan, a USAID-sponsored project that focuses on health care for Palestinian mothers and children, has trained 845 health care providers and equipped four specialized maternity hospitals. USAID's Emergency Water and Sanitation program has prevented disease by bringing clean, reliable water supplies into 15,000 Palestinian homes and sewage systems to 8,000 others through programs such as the Bani Naim water supply system in the southern West Bank.

USAID is helping the Palestinian Authority to build new roads and strengthen its borders to restore trade with Israel, building confidence and economies at the same time. The Qalandia roads to Ramallah, as well as several smaller West Bank road systems already have benefited.

"I think that money for specific infrastructure projects within the Palestinian Territories through USAID have been helpful in helping the Palestinian population at large," Malka said.

USAID also is supporting the Palestinian Authority's quest for economic growth by promoting small business and agricultural development and an increase of Palestinian exports through loan programs and technical assistance.

Since 2006, some 10,000 Palestinian agribusinesses, farmers and fishermen have received assistance and training through USAID's Palestinian Agribusiness Partnership Ac-

tivity, while the Palestinian Enterprise Development project has formed partnerships with six Palestinian companies to increase export, promote investment and generate new jobs.

Finally, USAID works with State Department entities such as Middle East Partnership Initiative, the Office of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in helping Palestinians to invest in their future through training programs for journalists, scholarships to U.S. universities and training for aspiring civil society organizations that serve as the foundation of a vibrant democratic society.

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Improved U.S.-Arab Relations Hinge on Security, . . .

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"Venture capital for this purpose is very limited," he said, adding that investment in higher education is crucial to moving development forward. "There is a need to create an Arab Harvard," he said.

Aburdene said it is important to develop an "economic culture" in the Arab world, a culture in which education and not "blood ties" is the major key to development and economic growth. He reminded the

audience that the prerequisite for economic development is to have lasting "peace and stability."

A "record high" number of corporations from the energy and defense industries attended the 2007 conference. They were joined by representatives of seven Arab embassies and two U.S. government agencies as well as other attendees.

The nonprofit National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, founded in 1983, is dedicated to "improving

American knowledge and understanding of the Arab world" and seeks to strengthen and expand "strategic, economic, political, commercial and defense cooperation ties," and to improve relations between the two societies based on, "acceptance of each other's legitimate needs, concerns, interests and objectives."

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Bush Says Turkey, U.S. To Expand Effort . . .

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mote peace and stability in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Somalia.

"There is a lot of difficulty in the region in general, and I believe that it falls to us as strategic partners to work to ensure that we overcome these difficulties and solve them," Erdogan said. "I have also seen that the president and I agree on these points, and I'm very happy to see that."

Meanwhile, authorities in Iraq's Kurdish-dominated northern provinces have honored their pledges to clamp down on the terrorists by closing offices operated by known PKK supporters. On November 4, authorities also secured the release of eight Turkish soldiers captured October 21 by PKK gunmen.

"We made a firm decision to shut down all the bureaus of the PKK in

Iraq," Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki told delegates at the Iraq Neighbors Conference. "We affirm here that the Iraqi Constitution obligates us to respect our relations with neighboring states and not to allow our territories to be used as a base or passage for attacks against any states in the region."

"I made it very clear to the prime minister that we want to work in a close way to deal with this problem," Bush told reporters at the conclusion of his meeting with the Turkish prime minister.

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Bush Applauds Recipients of 2007 Presidential Medal . . .

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ending segregation in the United States.

Hooks "joined the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and was an early crusader in that great movement," said Bush, but "the nation best remembers Benjamin Hooks as the leader of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. ... He never tired or faltered in demanding that our nation live up to its founding ideals of liberty and equality."

Medal recipient Harper Lee stirred the nation's conscience in much the same way, Bush said. Lee is best known as the author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a Pulitzer Prize-

winning novel about a small-town lawyer in the American South who defends a black man unjustly accused of rape. Lee's novel "has influenced the character of our country for the better," said Bush. "It's been a gift to the entire world. As a model of good writing and humane sensibility, this book will be read and studied forever."

Former Representative Henry Hyde (Republican from Illinois) and Brian Lamb, founder of television's Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN), also received the 2007 Medal of Freedom. Bush described Hyde as "a towering figure on Capitol Hill ... [who] used his persuasive powers for noble causes." Throughout his career, Hyde "was a gallant champion of the weak and forgotten" who was popular

with Republicans and Democrats alike.

Lamb, who established C-SPAN to televise congressional hearings, campaign events and conferences live and in full, created "a tool that enlivens democracy, and informs and educates citizens," said Bush. The president praised C-SPAN for its nonpartisan approach, and cited Lamb for his achievements in broadcast journalism and "his high standards and contribution to our democracy."

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