



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

USAID Provides Additional \$112 million in Humanitarian Aid

JULY 23, 2008 Addis Ababa (U.S. Embassy) – The American people, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), have provided an additional \$91 million in emergency food aid and \$21 million in emergency humanitarian assistance in response to the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia’s revised June 2008 Humanitarian Requirement Report. This new donation coupled with last month’s announce-

ment of \$80 million in emergency assistance brings the total U.S. assistance in response to



An Ethiopian holding a bag of wheat donated by USAID

the drought to nearly \$200 million.

The donations have come

in response to continuing humanitarian needs in Ethiopia, where poor and erratic rainfall distribution, high food prices, ongoing conflict, and limited humanitarian access have negatively impacted food, water, and pasture availability, resulting in increased malnutrition rates, food and water shortage, and heavy loss of livestock.

USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance’s (USAID/OFDA) total \$21 million contri-

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U.S. Humanitarian Aid Focuses on Saving Lives, Not Politics

By Merle D. Kellerhals Jr. Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States long has understood that humanitarian assistance for victims of natural or man-made disasters must be offered without political considerations, because saving lives and livelihoods demands nothing less.

"Humanitarian assistance has generally been provided on a nonpolitical basis, dedicated to relieving the suffering of humanity without taking sides in a disagreement or conflict, armed or otherwise. This approach has saved millions of lives," says James Warlick, the principal deputy assistant secretary of state for international or-



James Warlick, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Organization Affairs

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tribution includes more than \$5 million to non-governmental organization (NGO) partners CHF, International Rescue Committee, Merlin, and Samaritan's Purse for water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions in Ethiopia, including Somali Region, benefiting nearly 1 million people. It also includes \$5.8 million provided to the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the procurement of an additional 640 metric tons of ready-to-use therapeutic Plumpy Nut supplies, which will treat an estimated 64,000 severely acutely malnourished children. The assistance will be complemented by water, sanitation, and hygiene activities in therapeutic feeding and outpatient therapeutic centers.

USAID/OFDA contributed \$3 million

to NGO partner GOAL for rapid nutrition interventions in affected areas, including the procurement of ready-to-use therapeutic food. USAID/OFDA has also provided nearly \$1.5 million to NGO partner Concern to support emergency Ministry of Health interventions including community-based management of acutely malnutrition in Amhara, Oromiya, Tigray, and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples (SNNP) regions. The assistance will benefit more than 50,000 acutely malnourished children (both severe and moderate) and pregnant and lactating mothers.

The donation also includes \$500,000 provided to NGO International Medical Corps to expand the emergency nutrition and health response in Oromiya and SNNP and

\$800,000 to the Adventist Development and Relief Agency to support community therapeutic care and nutrition education programs in Somali Region.

USAID/OFDA has also provided \$1 million to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization to distribute seeds to drought-affected farmers in Amhara Region, benefiting more than 550,000 farmers.

To date in FY 2008, USAID's Office of Food for Peace has provided more than \$400 million in food aid to Ethiopia and USAID/OFDA has provided more than \$31 million for humanitarian interventions targeting affected populations in Amhara, Oromiya, Tigray, Somali, and SNNP regions. ♦

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ganization affairs.

This has been the situation for aid workers since the earliest days of the modern humanitarian movement, launched by Henri Dunant after the Battle of Solferino in northern Italy in 1859, Warlick said. "Only by keeping their efforts separate from the political positions and alliances established by governments could they obtain the consent of sovereign governments."

In an ideal situation, a nation would welcome assistance from other nations and nongovernmental humanitarian organizations, but when U.S. assistance is shunned, it is neces-

sary to turn to the United Nations and private organizations whose goals, structures and providers closely parallel those of the United States, Warlick said.

"Our close relations with other bilateral donor agencies, the Red Cross movement, and the United Nations humanitarian agencies gives us numerous policy options and are essential to effective, impartial, civilian-led interventions," Warlick said in recent congressional testimony.

"Even when a U.S. presence is not welcome in a particular country, a U.N. presence can assure the adherence to humanitarian policies, procedures and goals similar to our own. Often, the U.N. presence also

provides an umbrella through which U.S. goods and services can reach those in need," he said.

In some instances, regional groups can convince a nation that is rejecting assistance to accept international offers of aid. "When a state is unable to assist its people and unwilling to accept foreign assistance, the international community, through the United Nations, can use diplomatic and other peaceful means to try to persuade the state to allow assistance in," Warlick said.

"The art of humanitarian response lies in finding the best combination of responders for a specific crisis,"

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Warlick told a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee hearing on international disaster assistance.

James Kunder, acting deputy administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), told the subcommittee that the overriding principle that guides USAID in its far-reaching work is that human suffering should be addressed wherever it is found. In the past five years alone, Kunder said, USAID has responded to 355 declared disasters in all regions of the world. Many of these disasters largely go unnoticed by the rest of the world, he said.

"USAID provides humanitarian assistance that is politically neutral, socially impartial and is based on victims' needs rather than political factors," Kunder said. "USAID disaster response programs strive to live up to the principle of 'do no harm' and seek, to the extent possible, to provide protection to beneficiaries and build local capacities."

Many in Congress recalled the recent experience with the military junta that rules Burma and its reluctance to permit the United States and other nations to provide vitally needed humanitarian assistance directly to its people in the aftermath of the May 2 cyclone that struck the Irrawaddy Delta region.

The Senate subcommittee was examining U.S. policy options to determine what worked and if additional legislation might be needed to strengthen U.S. assistance efforts. The other purpose of the hearing was to determine if there is adequate funding provided for such



U.S. and Egyptian Soldiers give clothes to needy Afghan children during a joint humanitarian aid mission at Bagram, Afghanistan. (November 23, 2005)

needs in the annual budget.

Kunder said in events such as the Burma cyclone, it is critical for the United States to have policy options that help overcome political obstructions to humanitarian assistance.

Warlick said the United States has learned from situations like the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami that the U.S. armed forces can become vital aid providers in ways no other relief agencies can. "When the tsunami devastated the lives of millions of people in the Indian Ocean states, the U.S. military was a key partner in putting together a rapid and effective response," he said.

When situations like that in Burma, the United States does have other

options. "The question -- what is our last resort if all else fails? -- poses the greatest challenge in humanitarian intervention," Warlick said. There are two components to consider: one legal and the other practical.

The international community can act, even without the consent of the host government, under decisions of the U.N. Security Council and Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter. The decision to act is based on a determination by the Security Council that the situation presents a threat to international peace and security, Warlick said.

In 2005, world leaders determined that nations have a primary responsibility to protect their own people and that the international commu-

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United States Wants Zimbabwe Talks to Express Popular Will

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington -- The Bush administration will be closely watching talks between Zimbabwe's political factions in Harare, according to a State Department spokesman, who also voiced U.S. support for a negotiation process "that leads to a result that expresses the will of the Zimbabwean people."

The leaders of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on a framework

for power-sharing talks in an effort to resolve the political crisis marked by violence and intimidation by government supporters against their political opposition after the country's March 29 elections.

State Department deputy spokesman Gonzalo Gallegos said July 21 that the MOU provides "a vehicle for undertaking talks," but that power-sharing discussions have yet to take place.

"We're obviously keeping an eye on what's happening there and we're going to continue to watch it closely," he said. "I think we're waiting to see the evolution of this

process."

Gallegos said the United States is looking forward to a resolution that brings about new elections. MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai withdrew from the June 27 runoff presidential vote between himself and President Robert Mugabe after weeks of politically motivated violence against MDC supporters. U.S. officials, including President Bush, have described the election as a "sham."



Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, center, holds the hands of Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the main opposition party, right, and Arthur Mutambara, leader of the other function.

Gallegos said U.S. officials want to see "an election that is free and fair and open, and that all parties can participate in without fear of aggressive acts against them."

In July 15 testimony before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer said talks between ZANU-PF and the MDC can succeed if they result in a "transitional government that could then prepare for an election so that we could get back to a democratic path."

The MOU sets a two-week deadline for the parties to begin discussions

on issues such as a unity government and holding new elections. Both sides also agreed to ease political tensions within the deadline.

The talks were mediated by South African President Thabo Mbeki, who consulted with the African Union's top permanent official, Jean Ping, and Haile Menkerios, the U.N. envoy to Zimbabwe.

Describing the signing of the MOU as "a very historic occasion," MDC

leader Tsvangirai expressed optimism that a solution to the political crisis can be found. "In fact, not finding a solution is not an option," he said.

President Mugabe said the memorandum was signed "to chart a new way of political interaction."

The signing ceremony in Harare was the first time political rivals Mugabe and Tsvangirai have met since 1998.

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

Private Investment Is Transforming African Development

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington -- Private capital investment in Africa now exceeds the region's level of official development assistance and that is transforming the African development process, a senior U.S. Treasury official told the seventh annual African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum.

Addressing delegates attending the event's July 15 ministerial session, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs Clay Lowery told his audience investment flows to Africa have been increasing at an astonishing rate.

"As a result of better macroeconomic policies, high commodity prices, and a renewed interest by investors seeking opportunity on the continent, private capital flows to the region have increased from just \$11 billion in 2000 to \$53 billion in 2007 -- almost five-fold over seven years."

As investors expand their horizons, more and more countries in Africa are being transformed by the flow of private capital, he said.

"Oil-producing countries continue to attract the bulk of foreign investment," but, Lowery said, "there are many other well-managed economies -- such as Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique and Uganda -- which are also reaping the benefits" of these new capital flows.

Since 2000 -- the year the U.S. Congress passed the historic African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) -- annual economic growth rates in sub-Saharan Africa have accelerated from 4 percent to more



Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs Clay Lowery

than 6 percent, while inflation has declined markedly. External debt levels have plummeted, thanks in part to generous debt relief, while foreign exchange reserves have almost doubled relative to imports.

Illustrating his point, Lowery said the Kenyan government recently successfully sold one quarter of the shares of Safaricom, its joint telecom venture with Britain's Vodafone. The initial public offering of stock raised \$800 million for the Kenyan government and was four times oversubscribed, he said.

"Safaricom's shares are now trading well above their issue price. The inflow of capital allows the company to invest in new technologies to serve the Kenyan people," he added.

Lowery cited Ghana as another country that is now making great

development strides with the use of private capital. "The country issued an external bond last September. This was the first such issuance by a sub-Saharan African country outside South Africa in nearly 30 years. The \$750 million, 10-year bond was four times oversubscribed and continues to trade well."

"More important," he added, "this landmark transaction will enable the Ghanaians to invest in infrastructure -- the kind of investment that so much of Africa so desperately needs."

Gabon issued its own Eurobond in December 2007, and other countries, including Kenya, are developing bond initiatives to help finance infrastructure development.

Lowery recalled that U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson held talks last April in Washington with six African finance ministers. "What he heard he found most impressive: not requests for more aid, but instead questions about how to better attract private American investment."

While the growth of capital flows to Africa has been "impressive," Lowery acknowledged that the continent's share of total global capital inflows -- \$6.4 trillion in 2007 -- "remains tiny."

He added, however, that African nations can take three additional steps to further attract the private investment capital flows that fuel growth.

First: Maintain macroeconomic stability. Countries with stable, well-managed economies with robust growth, he told his audience, tend

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Young People Are Seen as Key to Success of Interfaith Efforts

By Ralph Dannheisser
Special Correspondent

Washington -- Interfaith movements hold the key to resolving conflicts rampant in today's world, but focusing those efforts on youth is critical to their success, panelists at a June forum sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace agree.

That emphasis on the young is especially vital when extremist groups like al-Qaida are concentrating their own recruitment efforts on young people searching for a meaningful identity, they contended.

Pushing the case for interfaith engagement, panel member Eboo Patel told an audience of 80 -- most of them directly involved with the interfaith youth movement through policy re-

search group, nongovernmental organization (NGO), university or governmental roles -- that religion "is an identity issue that in too many cases is causing division."

Patel, an Indian-American Muslim who founded and directs the Chicago-based Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), recalled feeling in the 1990s that "every time I turned around, there was some young person killing people to the soundtrack of prayer" on the news.

To his alarm, it appeared that "religious extremism was a movement of young people taking action," whereas interfaith conferences were marked by "senior theologians drafting documents." If that dichotomy is allowed to persist, "I think we lose," Patel said. "So the question is, how do we... have

young people more engaged as ... leaders in building interfaith cooperation?"

He founded the IFYC in 1998 to help provide the answer. It describes itself as an "international nonprofit working to build mutual



Muslim and Jewish girls volunteer at a New Jersey homeless shelter, where they also are able to learn about each other's cultures.

respect and pluralism among religiously diverse young people by empowering them to work together to serve others." Patel stressed the difference between the concepts of diversity and pluralism contained in that description.

"Diversity is simply a fact of the world -- people from different backgrounds in close quarters with each other," he said. To become a positive thing, "it has to be engaged ... in a way that builds trust, that builds bonds between people from different backgrounds. That's when diversity becomes pluralism."

Patel cited five intersecting forces that he said make interfaith youth efforts especially important now: a sharp increase in the youth cohort, especially in the most religiously

volatile parts of the world; an ongoing religious revival; a breakdown in traditional socioeconomic patterns; increased interaction between people from different backgrounds; and "the explosion of civil society forces."

Religious extremists, he argued, have benefited from that flux. "The two things that young people want the most are a clear identity and a way to make an impact. And it's those religious extremist movements who understand that and are addressing it," Patel said.

Now, he said, the interfaith movement is responding increasingly effectively.

"The vast majority of human beings are pluralists. There's little doubt about it, otherwise we'd be living in a far bloodier world than we

are," Patel said. But, he added, "pluralism has to be acted upon ... and young people need to play a central role."

He cited multiple FDCD projects, including annual work-study camps that enroll young Muslims and Christians, mainly in their 20s, from the Middle East, Europe and the United States.

Another program, Rizk said, brought together young people from the Middle East and Denmark, soon after Muslims in Lebanon and elsewhere had conducted violent protests in the wake of a Danish newspaper's 2005 publication of cartoons of Prophet Muhammad that they considered blasphemous. Rizk's group produced a videotaped documentary that, he said, traced

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nity has a responsibility to act when ineffective governments fail to protect the most vulnerable in their societies, Warlick said. The 2005 U.N. World Summit Document specifically established that nations have a "responsibility to protect" populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Warlick said the broader principle that seemingly internal actions can threaten international peace and security is an important one, which could be applied legitimately in a humanitarian crisis.

But forcing intervention for humanitarian purposes may have unintended consequences by putting more people at risk and affecting whatever assistance that already

might be flowing into a country, Warlick said. "Military intervention may well involve interruption of commercial activity, including the delivery of private aid, and displacement of previously unaffected portions of the population," he said.

During the initial weeks of the crisis in Burma, France threatened to seek U.N. Security Council authority to force humanitarian aid intervention under the "responsibility to protect" clause of the World Summit Document. Ultimately, that action was not taken.

While diplomatic negotiations continued with Burma, work was under way in Burma to relieve the suffering, Warlick said. Nongovernmental organizations and U.N. agencies already operating in Burma, often with financial support from USAID and the State Department, began to

assess humanitarian needs, coordinate responses and deliver relief. Burma's ruling junta, however, finally agreed to allow a regional response led by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

"Darfur, however, is an example where both lack of security on the ground and government interference impede humanitarian operations," Warlick said.

Prepared testimony for the hearing (<http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/hearings/2008/hrq080617p.html>) is available on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Web site.

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

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seminar participants through their "short journey from suspicion and discomfort and anxiety to dialogue and interaction."

Still another has been a three-year project, conducted in cooperation with 15 Iraqi NGOs, to build capacity to undertake conflict resolution work and peace building.

Farah Pandith, a senior adviser in the State Department's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, backed Patel's view that groups like al-Qaida exploit young people's search for an identity. "We cannot allow them ... to take advantage of things that we all in this room understand are just very natural," she said.



Eboo Patel, executive director of the Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago

"Young people are the future, the next leaders of government and civil society and think tanks and universities," Pandith said. "If we don't

understand the demographic piece that Eboo talked about, we will fail in everything that we're doing." She said government must change the hierarchical structure under which "the more gray hair you have, the more power you generally have," and seek greater input from young people.

"We want to partner with you," she told the private-sector members of her audience, "because you are flexible, because you are creative, because you can turn on a dime."

"If we do not find a way to build bridges of dialogue with young people now, we will be pushing our future out the window," she declared. ♦

Aid Agency Helping Women Advance in Small Business

By Kathryn McConnell
Staff Writer

Washington -- Ten Nicaraguan women established their forestry cooperative so they could earn enough to improve their families' lives. At first, their Co-Fochinorte tree nursery struggled, and the women had to take on other jobs.



Daniela Rivera's nursery cooperative in Nicaragua supplies trees to an MCC-funded commercial forestry project.

But then, in 2007, the nursery received a contract to supply trees under a commercial forestry project funded through the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation's five-year aid agreement with Nicaragua. The agreement aims to develop Nicaragua's rural economy.

The contract allowed Co-Fochinorte to produce trees on a large scale for the first time and to pay its members decent salaries. That year the co-op produced 100,000 trees and received a contract to provide even more trees in 2008.

Danelia Rivera, the co-op's vice chair, said the women never imagined they could make a good living from farming, which they love. The co-op is reinvesting some of its profits back into the business and continues to grow.

The co-op benefited from the aid agency's policy, adopted in 2006, to integrate women into all parts of its community-designed aid programs. The agency strives to provide equal opportunity to women and men in order to maximize the impact of programs on economic growth.

In Nicaragua's northwest region, where Co-Fochinorte is located, women first formed a consultative council to represent women farmers

in shaping the parts of Nicaragua's MCC agreement that deal with rural development and land ownership.

WOMEN IN MADAGASCAR

In Madagascar, MCC funding is being used to help women gain access to credit so

they can open and expand small businesses.

Sylvie Faramihaja, a credit counselor, puts her new MCC-funded moped and training to work traveling to communities in Madagascar's eastern region to teach women how to obtain a loan and manage a business. Many of the women she visits find it difficult to travel to a credit meeting in a distant community.

Counselors like Faramihaja also work with microcredit support groups, which help women get small loans without collateral and ensure the loans are repaid in weekly installments. The groups are established in partnership with large microfinance institutions.

The group-based approach to credit has proven to be effective with nearly a total repayment rate, MCC

said in a June 25 feature on its Web site.

WOMEN IN LESOTHO

In Lesotho, MCC worked with the government to ensure gender equality was legally guaranteed before it agreed to provide the country with long-term funding.

The agency "appealed to the Lesotho government's sense of reason, by convincing them that any assistance provided by the United States for economic development would be only half as effective if half of Lesotho's population was excluded from the formal economy," according to U.S. Representative Diane Watson of California.



Microcredit advisor Sylvie Faramihaja teaches women in rural Madagascar how to get small loans and manage a business.

"The participation of women in the [development] process and helping them realize their political and economic rights are central to any discussion of development," MCC stated in its fiscal year 2009 budget justification.

MCC is a U.S. government corporation that seeks to reduce global poverty through the promotion of sustainable economic growth.

Since its inception in 2004, MCC has approved multiyear funding agreements totaling more than \$6.2 billion with 18 countries: Armenia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, El Salvador, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, Tanzania and Vanuatu. ♦

U.S. Attorney General Urges Congress to Act on Detainee Process

By Bridget Hunter
Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States continues to seek a legal process for adjudicating the rights of those detained as illegal combatants that is constitutional, transparent and still addresses national security concerns.

"The responsibility of moving forward now rests with the legislative and executive branches as much as it does with the judiciary," U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey told an audience at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research in Washington July 21.

Mukasey called on Congress to set procedures for the more than 200 cases now pending before individual courts before judges move forward and potentially generate a range of inconsistent, contradictory or confusing rulings.

A June 12 Supreme Court decision upheld the constitutional right (known as habeas corpus) of individuals detained in the U.S. Navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to challenge their detention, but the ruling was silent on the procedures for such challenges.

As noted by Chief Justice John Roberts, who observes in his dissent that the decision leaves detainees "with only the prospect of further litigation to determine the content of their new habeas right," the *Boumediene v. Bush* decision rejects the procedures set in a 2006 law but "proposes no alternatives of its own."

Mukasey said that Congress and the executive branch are in the best

position to make decisions like these that affect national security because of their expertise in such matters and their ability to weigh the difficult policy choices they pose.

"Judges play an important role in deciding whether a chosen policy is consistent with our laws and the Constitution, but it is our elected leaders who have the responsibility for making policy choices," he said.

MUKASEY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The attorney general listed principles that he said should guide Congress as it drafts new legislation. Specifically, Congress should:

- Make it clear that no court can order enemy combatants brought into the United States;

- Set procedures that protect U.S. intelligence-gathering operations;

- Not allow habeas proceedings to delay the military tribunal process;

- Explicitly state the United States remains engaged in armed conflict with al-Qaida;

- Assign one federal district court exclusive jurisdiction over habeas proceedings; and

- Stipulate that detainees cannot pursue forms of litigation other than habeas proceedings to challenge their detention.

Mukasey reminded his audience that the Supreme Court decision addressed only the process afforded to those detained in Guantanamo and in no way challenged the United States' right to hold individu-

als who have taken up arms against it.

"The United States has every right to capture and detain enemy combatants in this conflict, and need not simply release them to return to the battlefield -- as indeed some have after their release from Guantanamo. We have every right to prevent them from returning to kill our troops or those fighting with us and [from returning] to target innocent civilians," he said.

Dealing with a large number of non-uniformed combatants fighting independent of official military forces has posed legal challenges never addressed by any other nation or international organization. Drawing on domestic and international military law, the United States created a military commission process to protect the rights of the accused and afford them fair trials.

The U.S. Department of Defense, under the authority of the Military Commissions Act of 2006, set up combatant status review tribunals to review individuals detained at Guantanamo who met the department's legal definition of "enemy combatant." Detainees are provided with legal counsel for these proceedings if they chose to accept it.

Since 2002, more than 500 detainees have departed Guantanamo for other countries. As of May 2, approximately 270 detainees were being held at Guantanamo.

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

U.S. Musicians Put Their Own Twist on Popular Persian Songs

By Esther Agbaje
Staff Writer

Washington -- An operatic voice sings of love lost and love found in a language unfamiliar to many in the audience and even to some members of the band.

Monika Jalili and her group NoorSaaz are Americans who sing their own interpretations of Persian folk songs and popular music from the 1940s through the 1970s.

The NoorSaaz fan base is mostly Persian, and many concertgoers initially are surprised by Jalili's soaring voice and her ability to sing -- and correctly interpret -- Persian songs.

"She has a wonderful voice. A tinge of accent gives it a quality that's very interesting," said one audience member following a June 7 concert at

American University's Kay Spiritual Life Center in Washington.

Jalili, a native New Yorker, is a classically trained vocalist who studied at the Manhattan School of Music.

She began singing in Persian after meeting an Iranian music instructor through a friend. He invited her to perform at a festival in Long Island, New York, to celebrate the Persian New Year, known as Nowrouz.

"I just fell in love with the music

and the poetry, and I try to make it my own," said Jalili in a recent interview with America.gov. "My [husband's] family loved it, and they began suggesting other songs." Her husband, Reza Jalili, is Iranian.

After singing for family and friends, she realized she wanted to sing in Persian as a full-time job, so she advertised on Craigslist for a band -- and it worked. Craigslist is a Web

creator," and the word "saaz" also can mean "musical instrument."

The show at American University was attended mostly by Iranians or by those of Persian descent. For the young, it reminded them of their families and songs they heard as children. For their elders, it reminded them of home.

After Jalili sang "My Sweet Beloved Mariam," the crowd exploded into thunderous applause.

"The songs were like old Chinese songs. It reconfirmed to me that music is international," said one Chinese American who attended the concert with Persian friends.

"I loved her translations," said an audience member of Iranian background. "If non-Persians understand, that's a plus."



NoorSaaz members Nathan Dillon, Mavrothis T. Kontanis, Monika Jalili, Timothy Quigley and Megan Weeder pose for the camera.

The occasional translation into English or French makes

the Persian love ballads accessible to a wider audience, but the band's love for Persia's culture and music shines through in each performance.

Violinist Megan Weeder had played Persian music with a group in Indiana before moving to New York City. She answered Jalili's ad, and the band NoorSaaz was formed in 2004. In addition to Weeder and Jalili, the band includes drummer Timothy Quigley, guitarist Nathan Dillon and oud player Mavrothis T. Kontanis. (An oud is the Middle Eastern version of a lute). NoorSaaz is the Persian term for "light

the Persian love ballads accessible to a wider audience, but the band's love for Persia's culture and music shines through in each performance.

"We try to bring the music to non-Persians. We're Americans and we put our own spin on it, but we still respect the music," said Weeder. The response from non-Persians has been very rewarding, she added. "It's been a great journey," said Jalili, commenting on the success of NoorSaaz. ♦

John McCain, Barack Obama Debate War Policies

By Michelle Austein
Staff Writer

Washington -- As they campaigned in battleground states and reached out to minority voters, the presidential candidates seemed eager to prove they are prepared to deal with the lagging economy and ready to handle challenging security issues as commander in chief.

Speaking in Washington July 15, presumed Democratic nominee Barack Obama said that as president, he would end the war in Iraq, which "distracts us from every threat we face."

"Iraq is not going to be a perfect place, and we don't have unlimited resources to try and make it one," the Illinois senator said, maintaining his position that U.S. troops can be withdrawn from Iraq within 16 months and some of those troops can be used to fight the war in Afghanistan.

"Our single-minded and open-ended focus on Iraq is not a sound strategy for keeping America safe," Obama said.

About an hour later at a town hall in Albuquerque, New Mexico -- an event billed as focused on the economy -- presumed Republican nominee John McCain responded to Obama's comments.

Saying "I know how to win wars," McCain said Obama "will tell you we can't win in Afghanistan without losing in Iraq. In fact, he has it exactly backwards." The Arizona

senator said following a plan similar to that used to surge troop levels in Iraq would help the United States defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Later in July, Obama is scheduled to make his first trip to Afghanistan and to visit Iraq for the first time since January 2006. McCain has criticized the Illinois senator for de-



Barack Obama talks about Iraq in a speech in Washington.

veloping a withdrawal plan without first meeting with commanders in the region.

A recent Washington Post-ABC News poll found 72 percent of Americans say McCain would make a good commander in chief, compared to 48 percent who say the same about Obama.

DOMESTIC ISSUES DOMINATE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CONVENTION

Both presidential candidates primarily addressed domestic issues when speaking to participants of the Na-

tional Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) 99th annual convention in Cincinnati, Ohio.

In his speech July 14, Obama told NAACP members that their organization serves as "a powerful reminder of the debt we all owe to those who marched for us and fought for us. ... It is because of them ... that I stand before you tonight as the Democratic nominee for president of the United States of America."

"But social justice is not enough," Obama said. "It matters little if you have the right to sit at the lunch counter if you can't afford the lunch." The presumed Democratic nominee said an essential element of equality is ensuring all Americans have access to jobs, health benefits and educational opportunities.

Obama said he supports providing more-affordable health care to the one in

five African Americans who lack it. He also wants to invest more in fighting poverty.

In his speech July 16, McCain also paid tribute to African Americans who fought for social justice, and like Obama noted more work remains. "You know better than I do how different the challenges are today for those who champion the cause of equal opportunity in America."

Talking about the economy, McCain said if he is elected, "I'll work with every member of Congress -- Re-

(Continued on page 12)

John McCain, Barack Obama Debate War Policies . . .

(Continued from page 11)

publican, Democrat, and Independent -- who shares my commitment to reforming government and controlling spending."

The presumed Republican nominee also discussed his energy goals, which include building 45 nuclear power plants that will create more than 700,000 American jobs.

Both candidates' speeches emphasized education, a topic that has gotten little attention on the campaign trail. McCain said he would provide more funding to recruit better teachers and pay bonuses to teachers who agree to work in troubled schools. He also called for more federal funds to develop online courses. Obama said he would also improve teacher recruitment and provide a \$4,000 tax credit to make college more affordable.

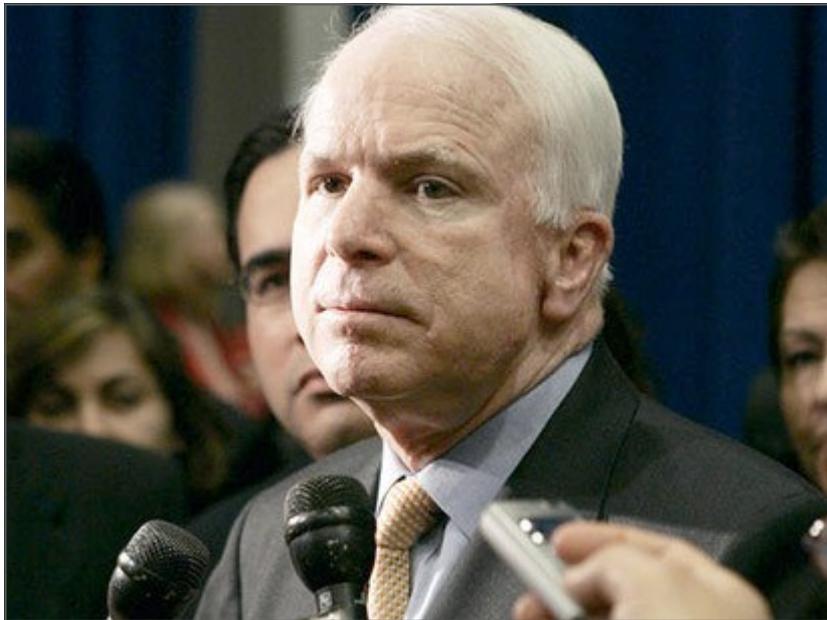
Polls currently indicate about 90 percent of African-American voters support Obama.

TELEVISION ADS TARGET SWING-STATE VOTERS

Targeting battleground states, the candidates are running television ads to further their campaign messages. McCain, who began running general election ads when he became his party's presumed nominee

in March, has spent about \$15 million on television. Obama launched his first general election ad on June 20, and has spent about \$11 million.

Political experts anticipate Obama outspending McCain because Obama, whose fundraising is setting new records for a presidential campaign, has more money. After



John McCain speaks at the NAACP convention in Cincinnati, Ohio.

the national conventions, McCain will be limited to the \$84 million available through public financing funds, but the Republican Party also can pay for advertisements on his behalf. Obama opted out of the public financing system, the first major party candidate to do so since the system was established. (See "Public Financing Helps Fuel U.S. Presidential Campaigns (<http://www.america.gov/st/elections08-english/2008/April/20080421130233rotcartnoc0.845318.html>).")

Both candidates have released ads

designed to highlight elements in their personal backgrounds likely to connect with voters in states like Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

In one ad, images of McCain from his years serving in the U.S. Navy are paired with narration that describes McCain's love of country. McCain "always put his country and her people before self, before politics," the narrator says.

In an Obama ad, the narrator says that after finishing law school, Obama "turned down big money offers, and helped lift neighborhoods stung by job loss."

Other ads address specific issues -- both have ads accusing the other candidate of having weak energy policies -- and some ads target key audiences. For example, a McCain ad playing in states with large Hispanic populations applauds

Hispanics for serving in the military and calls for immigration reform. A recent Gallup poll indicates Obama is favored by Hispanics by a margin of about 30 percentage points.

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

Presidential Candidates' Foreign Policy Advisers a Diverse Group

By Merle D. Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington -- Foreign scholars, journalists and government officials closely monitor the latest foreign policy pronouncements of American presidential candidates, but they also pay close attention to the candidates' foreign policy advisers, who can influence strongly the course of a new presidency.

During his presidential campaign, George W. Bush surrounded himself with people experienced in foreign policy and national security, many with a so-called neoconservative political philosophy.

The 2008 presidential candidates, who have been campaigning since the November 2006 mid-term elections, built their foreign policy advisory teams as the campaigns progressed. Now, less than four months from the November elections, they must sharpen the focus of their visions and offer specifics.

Democratic Senator Barack Obama has a foreign policy agenda that emphasizes multilateral engagement and reinvigorated global diplomacy, while Republican Senator John McCain brings a blend of neoconservatism and middle-of-the-road internationalism.

Nikolas Gvosdev, editor of the *National Interest*, said at a recent seminar on the future of U.S. foreign policy that even though many think policies will change when a new president takes office January 20, 2009, belief in such a shift is unrealistic.

Gvosdev said it is troubling that candidates and their surrogates suggest "there is a reset button for U.S. foreign policy." Regardless of the new president's differences with the Bush administration, most U.S. foreign policy continues along already determined long-term trends, he said.

In addition, as soon as the candidates become their parties' formal nominees, they will begin receiving



Obama advisers Warren Christopher and Madeleine Albright served as secretary of state in the Clinton administration.

daily briefings from national intelligence officers.

These briefings help ensure a new president is fully aware of the national security issues facing the United States and help keep him from jeopardizing sensitive negotiations by making uninformed or injudicious campaign-trail comments. This knowledge also maintains continuity in U.S. national security affairs from one administration to the next.

OBAMA'S ADVISERS

Obama has put together a national security advisory group that includes officials from the Clinton administration and advisers to Senator Hillary Clinton, Obama's chief

opponent in the Democratic primaries. Key advisers include:

Former Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Warren Christopher;

Former Defense Secretary William Perry;

Gregory Craig, former director of the State Department's Office of Policy Planning;

Former House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Lee Hamilton;

Former Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder;

Former National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, and former Deputy National Security Adviser James Steinberg;

Former Senators David Boren, chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and Sam Nunn; and

Former U.S. Representative Tim Roemer.

MCCAIN'S ADVISERS

McCain sought out mainstream Republicans to serve as his foreign policy and national security affairs advisers. Ron Scheunemann was the foreign policy coordinator for the first McCain presidential campaign in 2000 and is filling that role again. He has extensive experience as a Republican legislative staff adviser on foreign policy issues including NATO enlargement, U.N. reform and ballistic missile defense.

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Rice Says Iran Has Not Been Serious in Nuclear Talks

By Merle D. Kellerhals, Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States and five other world powers have shown they are serious that Iranian leaders must decide whether to halt Iran's uranium enrichment program, which could be used in manufacturing nuclear weapons, says Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

"And I think it's also very clear that there are going to be consequences if they don't," Rice says. According to Rice, the current strategy is to get the Iranian regime to stop uranium enrichment and to accept a package of incentives. If the regime does not stop, she says, there is enough agreement among the six countries to bring additional sanctions through the U.N. Security Council.

Rice spoke for the first time July 21 about a meeting held two days earlier in Geneva between Iranian representatives and representatives from the United States, Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia. William Burns, under secretary of state for political affairs, represented the United States at that meeting, Rice said, and it should indicate just how seriously the United States is taking this situation.

"I think we've done enough to demonstrate that the United States is serious, and to assure our partners that we're serious, and to show the Iranians that we're serious. I think



Secretary Condoleezza Rice

we've done enough," she said in a briefing while en route to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, for meetings with Gulf Council countries and other Middle Eastern nations.

Javier Solana, the European Union's high representative for the common foreign and security policy, offered a package of incentives to the Iranians on behalf of the six world powers, Rice said. "We expected to hear an answer from the Iranians, but as has been the case so many times with the Iranians, what came through was not serious," she said.

In return, Solana gave the Iranians

two weeks to respond. "I thought that Solana was absolutely firm and clear that it's time for the Iranians to give a serious answer," Rice said. "It clarifies Iran's choices. And we will see what Iran does in two weeks."

Rice said that if Iran does not respond by halting uranium enrichment, then the next steps will be taken at the Security Council, which has already imposed three sets of economic and related sanctions on Iran. "I don't expect any imminent action," she said.

Rice said these talks in Geneva have given the diplomatic process a new kind of energy. The process has tried to keep the door open to resolving the situation without further punitive measures if Iran resists.

Any discussion about having an interests section in Tehran, which would allow for some limited diplomatic contact but not full diplomatic relations, should not be considered as a thawing of relations, Rice said. The United States has had an interests section in Cuba since 1978.

The United States broke diplomatic relations with Iran in 1979.

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

Missile Defense Plan Directed at Rogue Nations, Not Russia

By Domenick R. DiPasquale
Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States has reiterated that its planned missile defense system in Europe is not directed against Russia but rather against the growing threat from rogue nations such as Iran, according to a senior U.S. military official.

"Ten interceptors in Poland could absolutely not match the hundreds of interceptors and thousands of warheads that the Russians have deployed," Lieutenant General Henry Obering, director of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency, said at a recent briefing.

Under the U.S. plan, a missile defense radar station would be built in the Czech Republic, with interceptor missiles based in Poland, to safeguard European nations against a potential missile launch from nations such as Iran.

On July 9, Iran conducted test firings of several missiles, including one model, the Shahab-3, that it claims has a range of 2,000 kilometers -- sufficient to hit targets in more than three dozen nations, including not just parts of Europe but also much of the Middle East and Central Asia.

Russia has objected to the planned U.S. anti-missile deployment, calling it a potential danger to its own na-

tional security posture.

At his July 15 briefing Obering said the United States has taken several steps to allay Russian concerns. These include numerous high-level



"Lieutenant General Henry Obering, director of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency"

discussions between the U.S. and Russian governments on the issue, as well as measures designed to increase the program's transparency by inviting Russian officials to visit the missile defense sites and observe flight tests.

Missile defense was among the topics discussed by President Bush and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev at their July 7 meeting at the G8 summit in Japan. At that meeting Medvedev agreed to continue existing efforts begun by his predecessor, Vladimir Putin, to transform the current U.S. missile defense plan into a system that in the future would be jointly managed by the United States, Russia and Europe.

Obering said the United States also has attempted to address Russian concerns by offering to build, activate and test the missile defense sites but not bring them to operational status until a threat from Iran emerges. He pointed out, however, that in earlier discussions with Russian officials, the United States had said one of the "triggers" that might cause the United States to activate the sites would be the flight of a missile with a 2,000-kilometer range -- the range Iran claimed for its Shahab-3 missile tested July 9.

The missile defense system, according to Obering, would have a deterrent effect by "injecting an uncertainty into the mind of an attacker as to what will succeed and what

will not."

"I believe that one of the reasons we've seen the proliferation of these missiles in the past is that there has historically been no defense against them," he said. "So they are of a lot of value to nations like Iran and North Korea. If we join together -- United States, NATO, Russia -- and field effective missile defenses, I believe it will have an effect on the value of these weapons. It will devalue them in the eyes of some of these countries."

Efforts to forge such multilateral defense cooperation are under way. The United States received an endorsement from NATO this April for the missile defense system. ♦

Student Visitors Ponder the Changing World of Journalism

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington -- A savvy group of high school students from Europe, Central Asia and the United States got a chance to turn the tables on the media and question Washington Times political reporter Stephen Dinan about new trends in journalism and the media's role in influencing public opinion.

The students, who visited the newspaper's offices July 16, are participants in the State Department-funded Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows (BFTF) program. Based at Wake Forest University in North Carolina, the program combines a three-week discovery of the United States with hands-on academic studies of democratic practices, conflict resolution and journalism.

Among the program's hallmarks is an introduction into the world of creating and maintaining a blog (or weblog), and Wake Forest professor and BFTF staff member Linda Petrou said the blogging aspect, in turn, has put much focus on journalism instruction.

"A lot of these folks are coming from countries that are newly free and they are still trying to find their way toward freedom of the press and expression," she said. "In fact, some of them make comments about how in their countries people print things and then get locked up and disappear -- still!"

Based on the questions posed to Dinan, the group of 17- and 18-year-olds, known as the Diplomats, had acquired a very informed perception of the current challenges in journalism.



Students from Europe, Central Asia and the United States get an insider's view from journalist Stephen Dinan.

Dinan had a few questions of his own, asking for a show of hands on from where his guests usually receive their news -- newspaper, television, radio or the Internet -- and whether they rely on only one source.

He also asked when was the last time they read a newspaper article from start to finish, rather than just the first few paragraphs. Almost everyone, including the adults in the room, said it had been weeks since they had done so.

STUDENTS CONSIDER ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEDIA

Some of the students shared their impression of the media with America.gov.

A student from Arizona said the program has helped fuel her interest in the media's role in leading public perception, citing current American concerns over the country's economic outlook to what they have been seeing and hearing on the news, and thereby creating a vicious cycle.

On the blog she set up through BFTF, she observed "the average American would most likely not monitor their spending habits as closely if the media did not influence them to do so."

A student from Germany also set up her first blog as part of the program, but said she is very skeptical of a blog's journalistic value since many blogs are subjective and unaccountable.

More prominent news sources and Web sites "cannot lie because of prestige and [they] don't want it to be ruined," she said.

All the students appeared to share a sense of skepticism about the media and the need to get information from more than one source. A student from Kosovo, who came to the program with previous journalism experience, having worked at a youth radio station in her home country, voiced this skepticism.



Like other print media, the Washington Times is trying to remain competitive in an increasingly Web-based publishing environment.

"You try to get different views and reflect if everything is true or some lobby is behind it," she said. BFTF's journalism program "made me want to hear more sources and to not trust the first thing that [supports] your side." ♦

Independent News Media Important for Democracy Worldwide

By Eric Green
Staff Writer

Washington -- Promoting independent news media is an important part of efforts to support democracy worldwide and it deserves a higher international profile, says a new report from a State Department-funded group.

David Kaplan, the report's managing editor and principal writer, told America.gov the document assesses the myriad efforts of the public and private sectors to promote independent news media worldwide.

With communism's fall in Europe and elsewhere, Kaplan said news organizations and independent journalists overseas have taken on a more important role, one that is emphasized in the report entitled *Empowering Independent Media: U.S. Efforts to Foster Free and Independent News Around the World*.

The report was published by the Center for International Media Assistance, established in 2006 by the National Endowment for Democracy to improve U.S. assistance programs for free and independent media worldwide. The center is funded by an annual grant from the State Department's Bureau of Democ-

racy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL).

Kaplan, an award-winning investigative reporter, said much more needs to be done to expand independent news media's "pool of donors" and increase the amount of funding such media receive from government and private sources. Kaplan

Promoting independent media, Kaplan said, refers to developing indigenous news organizations, which involves "everything from community radio stations in Afghanistan to sophisticated investigative reporting teams" in India.

He said only about a half-dozen people at the U.S. Agency for International Development and the State Department are responsible for overseeing media development funding from the American government "and they've all got many other things to do on their jobs."

Kaplan said that because of the cross-sector positive

effects of media development, it should be as high a priority as efforts to promote other elements of civil society, such as encouraging free and fair elections and training police.

Even though "a lot of terrific work" is being done to promote independent news media, the biggest challenge is focusing attention on its importance, Kaplan said.

According to the report, U.S. donors spent about \$142 million in 2006 on foreign independent media

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directs the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, a project of the nonpartisan Washington-based Center for Public Integrity.

FREE PRESS VITAL TO DEMOCRACY

Kaplan said development assistance for a free and responsible press has "proven itself ... vital to democratization and development," yet it receives a "relative pittance in development money." As a result, "we're calling both for more funding and for more attention" to help independent media flourish.

Independent News Media Important for Democracy Worldwide . . .

(Continued from page 17)

projects, with donations “split about evenly” between the U.S. government and private U.S. sources. Another \$100 million globally came from organizations not based in the United States.

“That’s a drop in the bucket given the kind of impact” that developing responsible, independent news media can have, Kaplan said, adding, “[T]his is a lever we’re simply not pressing enough.”

The report says that because media development affects “multiple fields, it often receives U.S. funding as a part of other projects -- under civil society and election reform, for example, or AIDS prevention and health care.”

“Frequently, this has meant that media development is addressed as a second thought,” the report said.

FREE EXPRESSION IS “OXYGEN” FOR INDEPENDENT NEWS MEDIA

David Kramer, an assistant secretary at the State Department who heads the DRL bureau, said July 15 that the report examines the experience gained from 20 years of U.S. media assistance efforts and provides an “analysis of the current state of media assistance” aimed at “establishing a solid baseline for further media development work.”

Speaking at a forum on Capitol Hill where the report was released, Kramer said “freedom of expression

is oxygen to independent media.”



State Department official David Kramer says threats to independent news media undermine democracy.

When independent news media are “under siege, democracy is undermined,” he said.

Kramer said his bureau has provided more than \$56 million in media-related projects globally since fiscal year 2004. Kramer said the money goes, for example, to support student-run university-based community radio stations in the Near East.

In Southeast Asia, DRL funding helps media and civil society organizations learn how to “harness information communication technology that can overcome political and economic barriers to freedom of expression and information,” he said.

Journalist Ellen Hume, who also spoke at the forum, told Amer-

ica.gov the report is unique in mapping how the United States has tried to support the development of “journalism capacity” in other countries.

“Those of us who work in this area think you cannot have a democratic political culture without open media and open access to information,” said Hume, whose research contributed to the report. Hume is research director at the Center for Future Civic Media at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a former reporter for the Wall Street Journal and other newspapers.

Hume said the report succeeds in providing an overview “for the first time on how independent media have developed over the last 20 years.” The study of independent media is a “pretty new field,” which is why the report has such importance, Hume said.

The report on promoting independent media (http://www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-Empowering_Independent_Media.pdf) is available on the Web site of the Center for International Media Assistance.

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

African Officials Pledge to Keep Virunga Parks Secure

By Lea Terhune
Staff Writer

Washington – Government officials from Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have pledged to protect wildlife preserves and develop tourism in the Virunga region.

The pledge came at the conclusion of a regional ministerial meeting held July 14-15 in Gisenyi, Rwanda, that was also attended by 45 delegates from conservation nongovernmental organizations, local governments and donor countries, including the United States. The Central Albertine Rift Transboundary Core Secretariat convened the meeting to tackle the complex problems afflicting the region.

Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC are in a region known as the Greater Virunga Transboundary Landscape, where a number of wildlife sanctuaries share international borders. Of particular concern is Virunga National Park, most of which lies in the DRC. It is threatened by military conflicts between rebel militia groups and the Congolese army, illegal trade in charcoal that promotes clear cutting old-growth hardwood forests and encroachment by the human population.

"It is vital to rid Virunga National Park of militia groups who threaten both people and wildlife. Without security, economic growth from tourism and other investment will not occur," U. S. Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans, International Environment and Scientific Affairs Claudia McMurray said.

Since 2003, the United States has supported economic development and conservation efforts in the Greater Virunga Landscape through the U.S. Agency for International Development's Central African Re-



Endangered mountain gorillas in Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo, snacks on foliage.

gional Program for the Environment and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership.

SENSITIVE ECOSYSTEM, ENDANGERED GORILLA POPULATION

The Virunga region is home to a population of mountain gorillas that comprises half of the estimated 700 gorillas surviving in the African wild. Charcoal traffickers are alleged to have deliberately killed seven mountain gorillas in Virunga National Park in 2007. The area has rich biodiversity: 43 percent of Africa's bird species, 27 percent of its mammals and 414 endemic species populate ecosystems ranging from mountains and forests to grassland and swampy lowlands.

The ministers, worried about the

activity of militant groups in the DRC, said their governments would maintain security in the protected areas they share. In addition to government troops and park rangers, U.N. peacekeepers are stationed in the area.

Rangers, who are poorly funded and ill-equipped to face militias, are prevented from entering much of Virunga National Park by the militias and charcoal traffickers.

Tourism and environment ministers and representatives from nongovernmental conservation groups discussed ways to expand investments in tourism infrastructure and attract more visitors for ecotourism. Because of the violence in the DRC, most tourism is limited to Rwanda and Uganda. According to the Associated Press, more than 12,000 tourists visit Rwanda annually to see the mountain gorillas, paying about \$500 apiece to do so.

Local poverty is another issue that affects the wildlife preserves. Keeping the parks secure is important so that tourism can grow and provide sustainable livelihoods for families in the vicinity.

Habitat encroachment by human populations is an issue wildlife sanctuaries throughout the developing world are facing, particularly as the needs of a growing population outstrip available natural resources. The rain forest habitat of the mountain gorillas in Virunga is being destroyed by charcoal traffickers' illegal forest clearances to meet the continuous demand for cooking fuel.

(Continued on page 23)

U.S. Environment Agency Seeks To Regulate Carbon Dioxide Storage

By Cheryl Pellerin
Staff Writer

Washington -- In a move that could help commercialize a fledgling technology for storing the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide (CO₂) in deep underground rock formations, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing technical criteria for well construction, operation and monitoring.

The proposal by the agency's Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water was issued under the authority of the Safe Drinking Water Act, which protects underground water sources from injection-related activities.

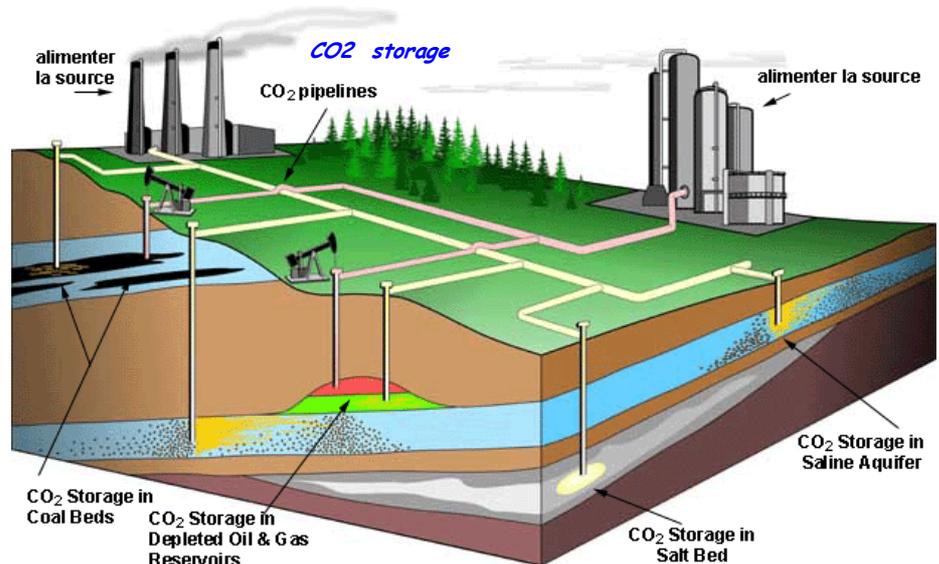
Elements of the proposed rule are based on EPA's existing underground injection control program, which addresses five categories of wells. The proposed rule would add a sixth category specifically for geologic storage of carbon dioxide 800 meters or more underground.

"This rule paves the way for technologies that would protect public health and help reduce the effects of climate change," Benjamin Grumbles, EPA's assistant administrator for water, said during a July 15 briefing.

"With proper site selection and management," he added, "EPA believes geologic sequestration could play a major role in reducing emissions of CO₂ to the atmosphere while protecting our nation's vital underground water sources."

REDUCING CARBON DIOXIDE

Carbon dioxide is one of the greenhouse gases whose excessive pres-



ence in the atmosphere is warming the planet and driving global climate change. Of the many efforts under way worldwide to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, one whose use is growing is CO₂ capture and storage, or carbon (dioxide) sequestration.

In CO₂ capture, carbon dioxide is collected from gaseous emissions from fossil-fueled power plants, refineries and other industrial facilities. In CO₂ storage, captured carbon dioxide is injected into geologic formations like sandstone or limestone saline aquifers, or old oil and gas fields and coal beds that no longer can be mined.

The end result is a reduction in the total amount of excess CO₂ in the atmosphere.

In the United States and around the world, engineers have been capturing CO₂ from industrial flue streams for 70 years and injecting it underground for 30 years to enhance oil recovery. Injecting CO₂ into an oil field reduces oil viscosity, expands its volume and changes its sticki-

ness, all of which help drillers get more out of the ground. But sequestration efforts that combine capture and storage have been occurring only since about 1997.

DEMONSTRATING SEQUESTRATION

A range of capture technologies and demonstration projects are being developed worldwide but none is yet commercially available. About 35 million tons of CO₂ are stored in the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), mainly for enhanced oil recovery. More recently, after 10 years of research, DOE and EPA are funding the first large-scale U.S. demonstration projects.

Three projects in the United States and Canada will conduct large-volume tests for storing 1 million or more tons of CO₂ in deep saline aquifers -- porous rock formations deep in the earth whose pores contain salty water and can be filled with CO₂.

(Continued on page 21)

U.S. Environment Agency Seeks To Regulate Carbon Dioxide Storage . . .

(Continued from page 20)

All are part of the Regional Carbon Sequestration Partnership, which is working to determine the best technologies, regulations and infrastructure needs for CO₂ capture and storage in different regions of the United States and Canada.

GOING COMMERCIAL

For the next 120 days, the EPA will accept comments on the proposed rule from policymakers, experts and the public. After considering those comments, the agency will adjust the proposal as it deems appropriate. The EPA expects to issue a final rule in late 2010 or early 2011. Currently, anyone who has stored carbon dioxide underground to test the process has done so with limited experimental permits from the EPA.

The new regulations are intended to



carbon dioxide emissions from motor vehicles.

offer "consistent national standards" and safeguards, Grumbles said, while allowing for individual state regulations to account for site-specific geologic settings and circumstances.

"A key feature of this proposed rule is extensive monitoring throughout the entire process," he added, "so that we and state regulators can prevent as quickly as possible any type of migration, leakage or poten-

tial problem. With the experiences we've had on the pilot project and throughout the world on geosequestration, we have not seen problems. However, we think it's important to be proactive and include extensive monitoring."

The July proposed rule would address only one aspect of carbon sequestration. Grumbles said EPA plans to work with its Office of Air and Radiation on proposed rules for capturing carbon dioxide at industrial or energy-related facilities, and with agencies such as the Department of Transportation on issues involving the transport of carbon dioxide to storage sites. ♦

Private Investment Is Transforming African Development . . .

(Continued from page 5)

to attract greater foreign investment. He cited an extensive body of academic studies that shows strengthening economic growth and increasing capital flows complement each other.

Second: Develop local financial markets with sound regulatory systems. Robust macroeconomic performance, he said, is not the sole determinant of capital flows. The development of financial markets, and their appropriate supervision, is

also a key factor.

Research by the International Monetary Fund shows that "a more developed domestic financial sector both increases the volume and reduces the volatility of capital flows," he said.

Third: Remove obstacles to foreign investment in the financial sector. "Foreign investment flows to where it is welcome; it follows, therefore, that African countries can attract greater investment by removing legal and regulatory obstacles to in-

vestment flows," Lowery told his audience.

Lowery said Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Botswana, and Zambia -- all countries with significantly liberalized capital accounts -- have attracted the bulk of portfolio flows to sub-Saharan Africa outside of South Africa.

Such investment in the financial sector can be particularly important in supporting overall economic growth, he added. ♦

Comet Skates to Success on Environmental Platform

By Andrzej Zwanecki
IIP Staff Writer

This article is the fifth in a series on sustainable manufacturing.

Washington -- Kids riding Comet Skateboards move easily and quickly.

Skateboarding is easy on their consciences too, because of Comet's eco-friendly manufacturing policies, according to Jason Salfi, the company's co-founder and chief executive.

"Skateboarding is filled with iconoclastic free thinkers," he told Phoresia.org, a Web site for surfing enthusiasts. "Going green fits right in. ... More and more people are finding us based on that ideal."

Salfi and his partner, Don Shaffer, believe the fast-growing sales of Comet high-performance skateboards are driven to a large degree by their company's commitment to sustainability -- making products without harming the environment or using up scarce resources.

The process used by the seven-employee company based in Oakland, California, is an extension of Salfi's tinkering with his own skateboard and thinking about the welfare of the planet.

The decks are made from ecologically harvested woods, such as maple, poplar and bamboo; held together by biologically based composites, such as a soy protein polymer; and covered with a nontoxic coating. They are produced by a solar-powered snowboard factory in nearby San Francisco and a plant in Ithaca, New York, run as a joint venture with e2e Materials LLC, a

maker of biodegradable composites.

Since Salfi started the company in 1998, he has "woken up to a lot of things," he told America.gov.

For example, the company has tried to make everything locally to shorten the supply chain and reduce transportation costs and carbon dioxide emissions in the process. (That has been more difficult than Salfi initially thought it would be.)

Comet Skateboards, which takes responsibility for its products from cradle to grave, offers to buy back defunct boards and shred and compost them because all materials are biodegradable.

Salfi realizes that a single business doing good work is not enough to make major environmental improvements. So Comet has joined a group that tries to unite the surf, skate and snow sport industries around sustainability objectives.

The company, in an effort to maintain ties to the community, sponsors the Hood Games, a local skateboarding event featuring music and games, in economically depressed parts of Oakland and Los Angeles.

Salfi said inner-city youth -- against all odds -- show interest in sustainability. "They have the most to gain from a more holistic approach,



Comet Skateboards

and they take nothing for granted," he said.

Comet also raised money for a large ecologically friendly skate park in downtown Oakland. But that project stalled when a major supporter withdrew, so Comet and other partners are reconsidering their options.

Salfi said Comet still is working to become fully sustainable; it is trying to find more materials locally and ensure that its supply chain is eco-safe.

But those challenges don't faze Salfi or his colleagues. The business and its environmental goals always will be a "work in progress," he said.

More information about Comet's sustainable practices and initiatives (<http://cometskateboards.com/blog/>) is available on the company's Web site.

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

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See also

<http://www.america.gov/>

Telling America's story

African Officials Pledge to Keep Virunga . . .

(Continued from page 19)

MINISTERIAL "VERY, VERY SUCCESSFUL"

McMurray told journalists in Kigali, Rwanda, that the killing of gorillas in 2007 was "a symptom of the instability in the park caused by the presence of militia groups, rather than a result of the ongoing poaching activities that unfortunately still occur in some places." She added the U.S. government was "concerned that our longstanding traditional conservation work in this region, with our partners in the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, was under threat, along with the mountain gorillas and the people living around the park."

The ministerial summit held "to attack these issues head on," McMurray said, "was very, very successful, in our view."

In the declaration, ministers committed to regional investment in tourism and infrastructure to allevi-

ate poverty and promote economic growth.

"[Most important], the ministers underscored the need for security and stability in Virunga National Park if increased economic activity is to become a reality," McMurray said, adding, "The United States is committed to pursue these goals with the governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda through the Transboundary Core Secretariat."

"We intend to work with other international partners to build on the work produced by this week's conference to ensure that the precious resources of this region --most especially the rare mountain gorillas -- can overcome recent threats and flourish well into the future."

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

Presidential Candidates' Foreign Policy Advisers a Diverse Group . . .

(Continued from page 13)

Other key McCain advisers include:

Robert Kagan, a scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace who served on the State Department's Policy Planning staff in the Reagan administration;

Stephen Biegun, vice president for international affairs at the Ford Motor Company and a former secretary to the National Security Council in the current Bush administration;

Richard Williamson, who held senior foreign policy posts under President Reagan and in both Bush administrations;

Peter Rodman, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution who

served in foreign policy posts in five Republican administrations.

McCain also has been advised by former CIA Director James Woolsey on national security and energy issues.

In addition, crossing several generations of Republican advisers, McCain also is advised by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage.

FIRST STEPS IN A NEW ADMINISTRATION

Obama or McCain will follow the same process in forming his new administration.

The newly elected president will

nominate secretaries of state and defense and select a national security adviser to make up the "battle Cabinet," which advises presidents during crises.

Also advising the new president will be an entirely new National Security Council. The president-elect will choose his nominees in the days between the November election and his January 2009 inauguration.

The U.S. Senate, which must endorse the appointment, typically acts swiftly to confirm key Cabinet nominees. ♦