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PEACE AND SECURITY

- 401 Obama Renews U.S. Commitment to Canada
(Launches clean energy initiative with Canadian prime minister) (830)**
- 402 Defense Secretary Gates Reflects on the Changing Nature of NATO
(United States signs military cooperation agreement with Poland) (490)**

AMERICAN GIVING (FOREIGN AID)

- 403 Record Number of Farmers Growing Biotech Crops
(Prospects of future biotech growth encouraging, report says) (722)**

DEMOCRACY

- 404 New Kazakh Legislation a Step Forward on Democratic Path
(Further improvements, more pluralism needed, United States says) (505)**

EDUCATION

- 405 Digital Library Brings Global Knowledge Network to Ukraine
(Project strengthens civil society, industry and academia) (860)**

WEBCHATS AND WEBCASTS

- 406 Rep. John Lewis Will Talk About the Civil Rights Movement
(February 23 webcast of Washington Foreign Press Center briefing) (254)**
- 407 The United States, the United Nations and Multilateralism
(February 24 webchat with the State Department's Jim Warlick) (248)**
- 408 Transcript: Muslim Student Yasmine Hafiz Discusses Life in America
(CO.NX webchat transcript, February 19) (2694)**

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409 Transcript: Ugandan-American Filmmaker Discusses AIDS, Other Issues in Africa (CO.NX webchat transcript, February 19) (2615)

OFFICIAL TEXTS AND TRANSCRIPTS

- 410 Transcript: State Department Daily Press Briefing
(Acting deputy spokesman Gordon K. Duguid briefs reporters February 19)
(3605)**
- 411 Text: Attorney General Holder at African-American History Month Program
(Says the study of black history is essential for understanding America)**
- 412 Transcript: Secretary Clinton's Interview with Asahi Shimbun in Tokyo
(Discusses North Korea, Six-Party Talks, U.S.-Japan-China relations) (1434)**
- 413 Text: Statement on Ecuador's Expulsion of Second U.S. Diplomat
(U.S. rejects suggestion of wrongdoing by embassy staff) (277)**
- 414 Transcript: Secretary Clinton's Town Hall Meeting at University of Tokyo
(Commends Japan for its leadership in clean energy, climate change) (6150)**
- 415 Text: Press Conference by Assistant Secretary Fried in Geneva
(Assistant secretary says it's a step forward for peace in South Caucasus)**

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

- 416 Chronicles of a Startup
(Triumphs and tribulations of an unusual business venture) (1386)**

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*WPD401 02/19/2009

Obama Renews U.S. Commitment to Canada
(Launches clean energy initiative with Canadian prime minister) (830)

By David McKeeby
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced a new clean energy initiative and joint efforts to confront the global economic crisis as both cited the close relationship of the two North American neighbors.

"I came to Canada on my first trip as president to underscore the closeness and importance of the relationship between our two nations, and to reaffirm the commitment of the United States to work with friends and partners to meet the common challenges of our time," Obama said in a joint press conference with Harper February 19 on Ottawa's Parliament Hill. "We are so closely linked that sometimes we may have a tendency to take our relationship for granted, but the very success of our friendship throughout history demands that we renew and deepen our cooperation here in the 21st century."

Obama and Harper announced the launch of the U.S.-Canada Clean Energy Dialogue — a collaborative scientific effort to develop new technologies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and combating global climate change. The initiative also will look at new infrastructure to deliver renewable energy from wind, solar and other sources to power businesses and communities on both sides of their border.

“How we produce and use energy is fundamental to our economic recovery, but also our security and our planet,” Obama said. “We know that we can’t afford to tackle these issues in isolation. And that’s why we’re updating our collaboration on energy to meet the needs of the 21st century.”

Both countries already have made substantial investments in carbon dioxide capture research, Harper said, and Canada can offer insight on its own experiences in developing a new regulatory structure to address emerging energy and environmental challenges.

Obama pledged renewed U.S. engagement in global climate talks, advocating the development of a globally inclusive cap-and-trade system. “We now have a partner on the North American continent that will provide leadership to the world on the climate change issue, and I think that’s an important development,” Harper said.

Canada is the single largest energy supplier to the United States, and the two nations share the largest bilateral trade relationship in the world, estimated at \$1.5 billion in goods and more than 300,000 people crossing their shared border every day. Obama and Harper discussed the recently signed \$787 billion U.S. economic stimulus package and considered ways it could complement similar economic recovery efforts currently under consideration in Canada.

Continued expansion of bilateral trade relations is essential, Obama said, providing assurances that the U.S. stimulus package’s controversial measure requiring U.S.-made goods for federally funded public works would be implemented in a manner that does not violate international obligations to the World Trade Organization or the U.S.-Mexico-Canada North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The leaders considered ways to strengthen NAFTA’s environmental safeguards and labor protections, an issue of concern for the Obama administration.

The leaders agreed to take action to restore economic growth and stimulate demand on both sides of the border, as well as to coordinate efforts to strengthen the auto industry, whose very survival depends on a network of closely integrated manufacturers and parts suppliers in both countries. The two nations will also work closely to restore confidence in financial markets and strengthen the global finance system as they prepare for meetings of leaders of the G8 and G20 major economies.

“The people of North America are hurting. And that is why our governments are acting,” Obama said. “We know that the financial crisis is global. And so our response must be global.”

On the diplomatic front, the two leaders discussed the April 17–19 Summit of the Americas in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, and Obama briefed Harper on his

administration's efforts to formulate a comprehensive international strategy to stabilize Afghanistan.

Obama praised Canada's humanitarian aid contributions to the shattered South Asian nation as well as its role as a leading contributor of combat troops to the 41-nation, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force. Obama did not ask for any additional Canadian commitments for Afghanistan, he said, pledging continued close consultations with Canada and other NATO allies — as well as governments in Afghanistan and Pakistan — as the United States seeks new ways to combine security operations with diplomacy and international development to help Afghans rebuild their country.

"The United States is once again ready to lead. But strong leadership depends on strong alliances, and strong alliances depend on constant renewal. Even the closest of neighbors need to make that effort to listen to one another, to keep open the lines of communication and to structure our cooperation at home and around the world," Obama said. "That's the work that we've begun here today."

What actions do you think President Obama should take to promote economic recovery and international stability? Comment on America.gov's blog (<http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/>).

(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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*WPD402 02/19/2009

Defense Secretary Gates Reflects on the Changing Nature of NATO
(United States signs military cooperation agreement with Poland) (490)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States believes that its NATO allies can make a significant, longer-term contribution in Afghanistan on the civilian side while U.S. forces work on strengthening the military side, Defense Secretary Robert Gates says.

"Frankly, I hope that it may be easier for our allies to do that than significant troop increases, especially for the longer term," Gates said before arriving February 18 in Krakow, Poland, for an informal meeting of NATO defense ministers.

The two-day NATO meeting was expected to focus on an array of security issues, including the current course in Afghanistan and preparations for the upcoming 60th anniversary summit in April. "It's a full agenda. We've got meetings of both the NATO-Ukraine Commission and the NATO-Georgia Commission," Gates said.

Gates said the defense ministers are evaluating capabilities on the proposed strategic aviation initiative, the allied ground surveillance system and British-French

helicopter initiative. The ministers also are expected to discuss at length plans for the NATO rapid response force.

Gates signed a new military cooperation agreement February 19 that formalizes the U.S.-Polish partnership to help modernize the Polish military. The U.S. and Polish special operations forces are already working closely in training and operations, but this new agreement expands and deepens those ties, he said.

Currently, the U.S. Special Operations Command has partnerships with five countries: Australia, Britain, Canada, Jordan and Poland, but only Poland has a formal memorandum of understanding.

In Afghanistan, Gates said, the new increase in U.S. ground forces will allow forces to remain in the field and help protect the general Afghan population in a better way than before. "I think that these additional numbers give us a better chance to provide the kind of security for the population that is necessary, frankly, for economic development and for governance to take hold and so on," he said.

President Obama announced February 17 that he is sending an additional 17,000 U.S. Army troops and Marines to Afghanistan in coming months, bringing the U.S. commitment to approximately 55,000 troops. (See "Obama Orders First New Troops to Afghanistan (<http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/February/20090217181852idybeekcm0.9454309.html>).")

Gates said the United States would like to see NATO commit its rapid response force for a short-term deployment to Afghanistan. The force has not been used before.

"The message is that it is a new administration, and the administration is prepared — as the president's decision made clear [February 17] — to make additional commitments to Afghanistan, but there clearly will be expectations that the allies must do more as well," Gates said. "I think this was the vice president's [Vice President Biden] message in Munich, and it basically will be my message in Krakow."

What foreign affairs actions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog. (<http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/>)

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*WPD403 02/19/2009

Record Number of Farmers Growing Biotech Crops
(Prospects of future biotech growth encouraging, report says) (722)

By Kathryn McConnell
Staff Writer

Washington — A record 13.3 million farmers in 25 countries are using agricultural biotechnology to help meet the world's food demands, according to a leading agricultural research group.

In 2008, the 13th year since biotech crops were first commercialized, farmers planted a record 125 million hectares (309 million acres) of genetically improved crops. That was 10.7 million more hectares than in 2007, the International Service for Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) reports.

“Biotech provides solutions for today's farmers in the form of plants that yield more per [hectare], resist diseases and insect pests and reduce farmers’ production costs,” said Sharon Bomer Lauritsen, executive vice president of the Washington-based Biotechnology Industry Organization.

Growth prospects for biotech through 2015 are encouraging, according to Clive James, author of the group's report, *Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops: 2008*.

In Africa, biotech farming began in two additional countries in 2008, the report states. In Egypt, farmers began planting genetically modified maize. In Burkina Faso, farmers started to raise biotech cotton. The continent “has perhaps the greatest need and most to gain” from the agricultural technology, James said.

Combined with South Africa's previously established biotech program, genetically modified food projects have established footholds in each of Africa's three main regions, helping policymakers and farmers in surrounding countries see the value of biotechnology to food security, James said.

In 2008, seven countries in the European Union were planting biotech maize commercially, increasing the numbers of hectares devoted to biotech 21 percent over the previous year, according to the report.

European farmers are coming to realize biotechnology's potential to increase incomes and reduce pesticide use, the report said. In February, EU members will meet to decide on approval of new biotech crops, according to Marcella Szymanski of the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs.

“Farmers everywhere are waiting and watching,” she told America.gov.

The report says that in 2008 some countries that had previously adopted a biotech crop added new ones to their soils. In the case of Bolivia, farmers started to grow biotech soy. Brazilian farmers began growing biotech maize and Australian farmers started raising biotech canola.

Modified soybeans continued to be the principal biotech crop cultivated in 2008, occupying 53 percent of all biotech hectares. It was followed by modified maize, cotton and canola. In addition to those crops, the United States grows biotech papaya, squash, alfalfa and sugar beets.

Since 2003, the State Department has funded programs to increase understanding of agricultural biotechnology and to address consumer and environmental safety concerns.

In 2008, the bureau expanded its biotech outreach efforts to include a focus on food security and biofuels. It sent U.S. experts to Peru, for instance, to explain to government officials the benefits of agricultural biotech in biofuel production, Szymanski said.

U.S.-sponsored specialists met with farmers, university students and politicians in Germany and participated in a biotechnology conference in Vietnam. The United States sent experts to South Africa to talk with legislators about conducting risk assessments for agricultural biotechnology. Experts also visited Egypt to urge passage of legislation that would smooth the way for new biotech approvals.

Officials in some countries lack adequate information to create policies covering biosafety, Szymanski said.

The World Health Organization has emphasized the importance of agricultural biotechnology to health because it produces more nutritious food and food with fewer allergenic characteristics, James reports.

The crops also benefit health because they require fewer pesticides and reduce fuel consumption and harmful carbon emissions, he said.

Leaders of the world's eight major economies have called for agricultural research to accelerate, James said.

The United States cultivated the most biotech hectares in 2008, followed by Argentina, Brazil, India, Canada, China, Paraguay and South Africa.

Biotech crops have been widely adopted by American farmers since their commercial introduction in 1996, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Soybeans and cotton engineered to tolerate herbicides have been the most widely adopted in the United States, followed by insect-resistant cotton and maize.

The executive summary of the ISAAA report (<http://www.isaaa.org/resources/publications/briefs/39/executivesummary/default.html>) is available on the group's Web site.

An overview of biotechnology crops in the United States (<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/biotechcrops/>) is available on the Department of Agriculture 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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*WPD404 02/19/2009

New Kazakh Legislation a Step Forward on Democratic Path
(Further improvements, more pluralism needed, United States says) (505)

By Carlos Aranaga
Staff Writer

Washington — Kazakhstan is making progress in implementing democratic reforms, the United States says, but further steps are needed for Kazakhstan to fully meet its Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) commitments in the areas of press freedom and political pluralism.

In a February 12 statement to the OSCE Permanent Council, Kyle Scott, chargé d'affaires of the U.S. mission to the OSCE, urged Kazakhstan to work with the OSCE to improve its newly signed media legislation by decriminalizing libel. He also urged Kazakhstan to develop legislation ensuring that all political parties are represented on independent electoral commissions and reducing registration hurdles for political parties.

In early February, Kazakhstan's president, Nursultan A. Nazarbayev, signed into law new legislation on the media, on elections and on political parties that was aimed at fulfilling commitments made by Kazakhstan at the November 2007 OSCE annual ministerial council meeting. Kazakhstan will chair the OSCE in 2010.

With 56 participating states from Europe, Central Asia and North America, the OSCE is the largest regional security organization in the world. The OSCE is a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its area.

Scott called the new Kazakh legislation a step forward on Kazakhstan's path to democracy.

But the chargé d'affaires also made note of new draft legislation under consideration in Kazakhstan's parliament that would restrict freedom of expression via the Internet. Scott said that to meet OSCE commitments to wider and freer dissemination of information and freedom of expression, a key aspect of which is access to the Internet, Kazakhstani law should secure such access for the people of Kazakhstan.

At the 2007 OSCE ministerial, Kazakhstan further committed to advancing specific democratic political reforms before the end of 2008.

In January, when the Kazakh parliament passed the new legislative package, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Miklos Haraszti welcomed adoption of a number of amendments to Kazakhstan's media law, and underscored the need for further democratization of media governance. "I welcome the easing of administrative burdens on the media, as well as the fact that civil society was involved in the discussion about the changes," wrote Haraszti in a letter to Kazakh officials.

Haraszi provided the authorities with a list of the most important reforms that still need to be carried out, including de-monopolizing the media market; decriminalizing libel; and abolishing the use of closure or confiscation of circulation as a penalty.

Scott said the United States would work closely with Kazakhstan as it prepares for its 2010 OSCE chairmanship. He added that by continuing to take steps to bring its legislation fully in line with its OSCE commitments, Kazakhstan will not only strengthen the OSCE, but also develop the democratic institutions that are the foundation for long-term stability and prosperity.

For more information on the OSCE and the OSCE chairmanship, visit the organization's Web site (<http://www.osce.org/>).

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*WPD405 02/19/2009

Digital Library Brings Global Knowledge Network to Ukraine
(Project strengthens civil society, industry and academia) (860)

By Jeffrey Thomas
Staff Writer

Washington — Ukrainian officials and legislators, university presidents, diplomats and representatives of Ukraine's business community and civil society gathered in the Antonovych Library of the National University of Kyiv—Mohyla Academy January 26 to launch a project aimed at creating collaboration between universities and the business community.

The Electronic Library of Ukraine is a new national digital network that will improve access for the country's students, scholars and businesspeople to the world's academic and research information while making available for the first time on the international digital network the holdings of Ukraine's libraries. This type of collaboration between universities and businesses is common in the United States but new to Eastern Europe, where during the Soviet era research and teaching were kept in strictly separate spheres.

The new project will "help reduce the divide between research and teaching," says Marta Farion, the president of the Kyiv Mohyla Foundation of America, which initiated the collaborative effort. The foundation is based in Chicago, which has a sister-city relationship with Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine.

The Electronic Library "should foster genuine cooperation among researchers, whether they are academics, faculty or students," said Farion, who is also chairwoman of the board for the project. "Electronic library 'knowledge centers' at Ukraine's universities should enable users to learn how to locate information and ultimately should facilitate the country's economic development, standards of public health and dissemination of information about technologies in agriculture and other

areas. Access to electronic information should also help move applied research to the marketplace and stimulate successful and profitable industry and business partnerships.”

The U.S. Agency for International Development provided a grant to get the project started.

In its initial stage, the project’s participating partners and collaborators include the National University of Kyiv–Mohyla Academy, Y. Fedkovych National University of Chernivtsi, V. Karazin National University of Kharkiv, Ukraine’s Informatio-Consortium Association, and the Center for Technology Innovation Management at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

More private and public funding is needed to expand electronic library access to more universities than the initial three members, Farion said. “The long term goal is to make participation in the electronic library project available to all of the universities of Ukraine.”

“By providing Ukrainians with access to a global network of knowledge, the Electronic Library of Ukraine project will be an invaluable resource for building a stronger civil society, engaging Ukraine to more fully participate in the world’s community and make Ukraine more competitive on a global scale,” said former U.S. Ambassador William Green Miller at the project’s inauguration. The project “will not only allow thousands of academics, students and universities to immediately gain access to a wide range of information, but also will create new opportunities for generations to come.”

“There is a sincere recognition on the part of progressive scholars, scientists and dedicated individuals in leading institutions and the government that this project is essential to the country’s growth and development,” Farion said.

She said the need for the project was evident in the fact that, even 17 years after independence, Ukraine lacks the free and open communication with the larger world necessary for development.

“Ukrainian law and Soviet tradition still divide the academic and research worlds,” she said. “As a general rule, universities are not permitted to engage in research while research institutes do not have to share their work with the academic community, and neither group collaborates with the other.”

As a result, Ukrainian society receives little practical benefit from the research that is done, “and there is little opportunity to exchange information with researchers around the world,” Farion said.

“The successful formula of collaboration and mutual support between universities and the business community found in the U.S. is not only absent in Ukraine but is largely unknown. This isolation and the inability to participate and compete fairly in the world community was the key reason for organizing a team from the United States and Ukraine to help remedy the situation,” she explained.

“The project will begin a process of diminishing the culture of secrecy created by almost a century of Soviet rule,” Farion said. “It will encourage a culture of openness, collaboration and integration, first within the academic and research communities and then with other sectors of society as well. There is an expectation that with equal access to the world’s information resources, Ukraine will have the tools to compete politically and economically as a partner within the community of nations.”

The Kyiv Mohyla Foundation of America is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization established to help the National University of Kyiv–Mohyla Academy and other institutions of higher learning in Ukraine “to reach excellence in education, innovative research, personal and intellectual growth of its students and faculty, in a democratic academic environment that will facilitate and further Ukraine’s democratic reform, with a focus on the rule of law, free market, business development and sustained economic growth within the global community of nations,” according to the foundation’s Web site. More than 45,000 Chicagoans consider themselves to be of Ukrainian ancestry, according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

(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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*WPD406 02/19/2009

Rep. John Lewis Will Talk About the Civil Rights Movement

(February 23 webcast of Washington Foreign Press Center briefing) (254)

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States has involved a legion of activists, and one of the most respected of these is Representative John Lewis. Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi has called him "the conscience of the U.S. Congress." And Roll Call magazine has said, "John Lewis ... is a genuine American hero and moral leader who commands widespread respect in the chamber."

On February 23, at 2 p.m. EST (19:00 GMT), Representative Lewis will talk about his experiences in the Civil Rights Movement and the new direction the movement is taking. America.gov will webcast the briefing live.

In 1977, John Lewis was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to direct more than 250,000 volunteers of ACTION, the federal volunteer agency. In 1981, he was elected to the Atlanta City Council, where he was an advocate for ethics in government and neighborhood preservation. He was elected to Congress in November 1986 and has served as the U.S. representative of Georgia's 5th Congressional District since then. The district includes the entire city of Atlanta, Georgia, and parts of Fulton, DeKalb and Clayton counties. Lewis is senior chief deputy whip for the Democratic Party in the House leadership, a member of the House Ways & Means Committee, a member of its Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, and chairman of its Subcommittee on Oversight.

To view the webcast, go to <http://www.cpcwebcast.com/state>. No registration is required.

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*WPD407 02/19/2009

The United States, the United Nations and Multilateralism
(February 24 webchat with the State Department's Jim Warlick) (248)

What is the role of the United States in the United Nations?

On February 24, at 10:30 a.m. EST (15:30 GMT), please join Acting Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs Jim Warlick for an online discussion on the topic of multilateralism and the United States.

James "Jim" Warlick began as principal deputy assistant secretary of state in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs in April 2006, with responsibility for all aspects of U.S. foreign policy at the United Nations and a number of other multilateral organizations. Before that, as director of the Office of European Security and Political Affairs, he was responsible for political-military and security issues for Europe and the former Soviet Union, including NATO, OSCE and related arms control and nonproliferation policy issues (2005–2006). Before joining the State Department, he was deputy representative of the Asia Foundation in Washington and the Philippines and a foreign affairs analyst in the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress.

If you would like to participate in this webchat, please go to <http://statedept.connectsolutions.com/multilateralism/>. No registration is needed. Simply choose "Enter as a Guest," type in your preferred screen name, and join the discussion. We accept questions and comments in advance of, and at any time during, the program.

The transcript of this webchat will be available on America.gov's webchat page (<http://www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html>), where information about upcoming webchats is also available.

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*WPD408 02/19/2009

Transcript: Muslim Student Yasmine Hafiz Discusses Life in America
(CO.NX webchat transcript, February 19) (2694)

Yasmine Hafiz, a student at Yale University, answered questions in a CO.NX webchat February 19. She discussed the culture of America's Muslim youth.

Following is the transcript:

(begin transcript)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Bureau of International Information Programs
Webchat Transcript

Guest: Yasmine Hafiz
Date: February 19, 2009
Time: 9:00 a.m. EST (1400 GMT)

Webchat Moderator [Sarah]: Welcome to our webchat! On February 19 at 14:00 GMT, Yasmine Hafiz will talk about what it is like to be a Muslim teenager in America. We are taking your questions now.

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: Welcome to today's webchat! The webchat will start at 1400GMT.

Webchat Moderator [Sarah]: Hi everyone! Thanks for joining us today. We will begin in just a few minutes.

Yasmine Hafiz: Life in post 9/11 America has been challenging for America Muslims: the 'random' searches at the airport, the impression that hijab = oppression, that Muslims are "the other." We heard so many misconceptions about Islam in the media, yet no coherent Muslim voices ever got airtime. Where are the Moderate Muslims? Well, we're fairly moderate - maybe we should speak up. So in 2002 we sent out a survey to 44 Islamic full-time and Sunday Schools across the country. The 150 responses which we received displayed such a variety of opinions and stories that we felt motivated to continue with our project - of not only writing an educational and entertaining handbook for the average American Muslim teenager, but also an enlightening guide to the basics of Islam for non-Muslims who are curious about Islam or want to pursue an interfaith dialogue.

Webchat Moderator [Sarah]: Thanks for joining us today, Yasmine. Please continue to submit your questions.

Question [2day]: Where is your book available?

Answer [Yasmine Hafiz]: It's available on Amazon.com (file:///A:\PDNA2\IIP\Press\CP\webchats\Amazon.com) and in major bookstores as of Feb. 10th. If a bookstore doesn't have it, you can ask them to order it from our publisher, Simon & Schuster.

Q [2day]: Is your book English only?

A [Yasmine Hafiz]: At the moment it's only in English, but we are working on translations into Dutch, French, and Chinese, with more to follow!

Q [Lauren]: How is it living in America? Do you have a lot of friends?

A [Yasmine Hafiz]: Hi Lauren! It's great living in America, and I do have a lot of friends from a variety of different backgrounds. That's one of the greatest things about living in the United States. I am currently attending Yale University where I am friends with people from around the world.

Q [Ahmad]: Assalamu alykum. How are you? I'm from Uzbekistan. My name is Ahmad. I'm going to visit the US this year as a student. Can I ask any question about Islam?

A [Yasmine Hafiz]: Hi Ahmad. Yes, you can ask any question about Islam. I hope you enjoy your time in the US as a student. I would recommend that you read my book soon after you arrive here, because I think it is a great snapshot of the way American Muslim teenagers think and behave.

Webchat Moderator [Sarah]: Welcome to everyone just arriving! We are chatting with Yasmine Hafiz about what it is like being a Muslim teenager in America.

Q [Ahmed Aly]: Can I ask you this usual question? What is it like to growing up Muslim in America? I am really interested to know!

A [Yasmine Hafiz]: Growing up Muslim in America is in some ways very similar to growing up as a practitioner of any religion, but in some ways it is very different, especially after the horrible attacks of 9/11. Before 9/11, my brother and I would practice Islam just as young children would practice any religion. We were always proud to be Muslims, and we never felt any prejudice or fear towards us, although most non-Muslim Americans didn't know very much about Islam. After 9/11, the American people were bombarded with an incredibly negative perception of Islam that really had nothing to do with my religion. People had awful stereotypes that all Muslims were terrorists that hated the United States, not realizing that American Muslims were just as sad and horrified on 9/11. The first few years afterwards were definitely a challenge, as suddenly being a Muslim had become confused with political implications that weren't really applicable at all. That's one of the reasons we wrote this book, to make teenage Muslims more comfortable with their faith and for non-Muslims to get rid of some of the stereotypes they held about Muslims.

These days we find that many Americans know much more about Islam, though there is definitely still some prejudice. During the Presidential Election, people who didn't want President Barack Obama to be elected claimed that he was a Muslim as a sort of slur. While he is not, in fact, a Muslim, I found it awful and offensive that being a Muslim was seen as such a bad thing.

Webchat Moderator [Sarah]: Here is a link to a music video on some American Muslim college students' views on what it is like being Muslim in America:
<http://www.america.gov/multimedia/video.html?videoid=1667940807>

A [Yasmine Hafiz]: Growing up as a Muslim in America has challenges beyond the negative stereotypes that arose after 9/11. Being a teenager is difficult for people of any religion! As a teenager one is confronted with a range of issues. We cover some of the most frequently asked questions in our chapter, "The Four Ds- Drinking, Dancing, Dating, and Drugs." We encourage teenagers to make good friends that will

help them resist these challenges and to talk with their parents about their lifestyle choices. Our book is meant to provoke discussion and act as a guide. We hope it will make you ask questions and that it will make you think.

Q [Ahmed Aly]: You are in Yale 2012 class, which means that you are 18 yrs old, right? I am also a Stanford summer student, but I could not travel to America, because I was not granted the visa! Since I could not attend my Stanford classes, I would love to know your experience in Yale as a Muslim student?

A [Yasmine Hafiz]: I am having a wonderful experience at Yale as a Muslim student. There are many Muslim students here at Yale, and there is an active chapter of the Muslim Students' Association [MSA]. There is a chapel very close by to my hall which is open at all hours for prayers, and the University Chaplain's Office sponsors study breaks with snacks and is available to help with any issues concerning religion. There was a beautiful Ramadan Banquet in Commons, our largest dining hall, with lovely decorations and halal meat. One of the best aspects of Yale is having conversations with the other students. My friends are all really interested in my book and we love to talk about religion and other issues. They ask interesting and intelligent questions and we learn so much from each other. I would highly recommend Yale to anyone!

Yasmine Hafiz: Yes, I am 18 years old.

Webchat Moderator [Sarah]: Here is a link to a video on how some American college students celebrate Ramadan: <http://stream.state.gov/streamvol/libmedia/usinfo-video/470/usinfo-video/gtown.wmv>

Q [Ahmed Aly]: Yasmine! Do you know what does your name mean in Arabic? It means a nice flower.. Yasmine is kind of a beautiful flower!

A [Yasmine Hafiz]: Yes, my parents named me Yasmine, the Arabic word for jasmine flower.

Q [Dr Yasir]: How can an American Muslim teenager help Pakistan?

A [Yasmine Hafiz]: I think the best way for American Muslim teenagers to help Pakistan is by living in a way that shows the beauty of the religion of Islam. Many non-Muslim Americans perceive Pakistan as being a violent country full of fanatics and fundamentalists, because the majority of Pakistanis are Muslims. If we show them that most Muslims are moderate, reasonable, good people, hopefully they will understand that Islam is not to blame for all of Pakistan's problems. Being a good person is the best way to improve the image of Islam in the world.

I also believe that it would greatly help Pakistan if the education system there was improved. Education is the way to overcome old barriers by being exposed to a variety of new ideas and people. I believe that everyone has the right to literacy and a basic education.

Many people ask us why we wrote this book. I'll now elaborate on the reasons for the book, and also talk a little about the writing process.

After 9/11, my family and I felt very aware of the prejudice against Islam held by many members of the public and perpetuated by the media. One day we were in a bookstore and I was looking in the teen non-fiction section, which included books specifically for teenagers of many major religions. However, I was surprised to see that there were no books about teenage Muslims, though there were books for teenage Christians, Jews, and even teenage Wiccans! I mentioned this to my mother, and this lack of a resource for Muslim teenagers really bothered us because everyone in my family loves to read. We thought about it for a while until we realized that, as a family including teenage Muslims, we were uniquely qualified to write this book! My mother has been a Sunday school Islamic teacher for years, and my brother and I are experts on the teenage Muslim experience since we live it on a daily basis. Once we had decided to write this book, the project really began in earnest.

Although we could speak for ourselves, we wanted to get the opinions of more teenage Muslims. We started out by sending a survey to Muslims across America, asking them for their opinions on a variety of subjects including peer pressure, their role models, and the challenges they faced as American Muslims. Many of these responses are quoted in our book, and I feel the diversity of the answers shows that there is no standard American Muslim. American Muslims, like Americans, come from all over America and from all over the world. They speak many different languages and come from various cultures, though most now call themselves American. Though they might not all pray or fast to the same degree, all of them call themselves Muslims.

Next we talked about the topics that we wanted to cover in the book. We made a rough Table of Contents, and then worked on it from there. We knew that we wanted the book to be fun and appealing, so we included quizzes, lists, and pictures. You don't have to read the book from cover to cover if you don't want to, it can be useful just to flip through it and find answers to specific questions. My brother Imran and I mainly concentrated on the teen-specific parts of the book while my mother Dilara tackled most of the Quranic research, checking with scholars that our facts were correct before publication. Next we edited and re-edited each others' work. Then we worked closely with our publisher on the final look of the book. We are so thrilled that it will now be widely available as a resource for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Webchat Moderator [Sarah]: Here is a link to an interview with Yasmine's mother, Dilara, about the book: <http://globalcomment.com/2007/the-american-muslim-teenagers-handbook/>

Q [Ahmed Aly]: Salam Alikum Yasmin. I am Ahmed, 22 yrs old, from Cairo, Egypt. I want to tell you that I am proud of you, because of your book. And I have a question for you! Here in Egypt, we - the Muslim youth - are worried and afraid a little bit of visiting the United States, because we hear in the news about the security things, and as we see in our media, we feel that Muslims - specially youth - are suspected in America, and there are doubts in the Muslim youth that they are radical or terrorists - although we are not of course. My question exactly is: Does America and Americans really have doubts about the Muslim youth? And do you encourage the Muslim youth to visit America, and not be afraid of the security things we hear of? Thanks!

A [Yasmine Hafiz]: Definitely after 9/11 it was a little scary to travel internationally as a Muslim. I heard many horror stories about friends and relatives being detained and aggressively questioned. I'm happy to say that I don't think that is the case now at all. Many people now know much more about Islam and realize that not all Muslims are terrorists. Nonetheless, security is important in America and one must be careful while traveling not to joke about sensitive issues. I would absolutely encourage Muslim youth of other countries to visit America as it's a wonderful country! Most Americans are kind, warm people just like those you'd meet in any other country.

Q [Ahmed Aly]: Yasmine! I always say that youth can fix what the politicians do!! Don't you think that it's easy for the Muslim youth to communicate with other American youth, and make a "peaceful" dialogue that would build a "real" - not fabricated - mutual understanding relationship between different cultures? Don't you think that youth regardless of their background can make this world better, just regardless of any complicated conflicts between politicians, countries, and cultures?

A [Yasmine Hafiz]: I absolutely believe that. Engaging in a peaceful dialogue is something that we attempt to do with our book. In America it is fairly easy for people of different religions to talk rationally about their ideas without coming to blows. My family and I are every involved with interfaith activities and we seek to reach out to people of all faiths. Most religions have a lot in common. I feel the fundamental code of Islam is to do good deeds and to believe in God, two ideas that many religions also believe in. As the youth, it is our responsibility to address the problems in our world as we are the future leaders.

Comment [Ahmed Aly]: As a fact of matter, there are some restrictions against the Muslim youth – non-Americans of course - who want to visit America to study in it. But I have so much of hope that Obama changes this soon.

A [Yasmine Hafiz]: I also hope that it will become easier to study in America. Not only would it benefit international students, but it is so useful for Americans to meet people from different countries. Though our book attempts to break down stereotypes, the most effective way to do so is by actually meeting and knowing the people that you have stereotypes about. I have friends from all over the world here at Yale, and that is one of the best parts of my college experience. Just in my hall, there are people from London, Paris, Ethiopia, China, Korea, Pakistan, Singapore, New Zealand, and various other countries. Meeting with youth from other cultures is so useful and interesting.

Webchat Moderator [Sarah]: Thanks to all of you for joining us today. However, we are now reaching the end of the program. I hope you will visit our page at <http://co-nx.state.gov> (<http://co-nx.state.gov/>) to learn about future programs.

Yasmine Hafiz: Thank you so much to everyone who participated today. I really enjoyed speaking about being a Muslim in America today, and I hope it's been informative. Being a Muslim and being an American at the same time is an important part of my life. My religion is Islam but my culture is American. My book is available on Amazon.com (<file:///\\PDNA2\IIP\Press\CP\webchats\Amazon.com>) and in

many bookstores nation-wide, and for more information visit www.theamth.com (<http://www.theamth.com/>).

Emails can be sent to authors@theamth.com (<mailto:authors@theamth.com>).
Thanks for your time. I was honored to be a part of this webchat.

Webchat Moderator [Sarah]: Thank you very much, Yasmine!

Webchat Moderator [Sarah]: The Webchat is now closed. We wish to thank Yasmine Hafiz for joining us today. A transcript of today's webchat will be posted to <http://co-nx.state.gov> and to <http://www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html> within one business day. Speakers are chosen for their expertise and may not reflect the views of the U.S. Department of State.

(end transcript)

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)
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*WPD409 02/19/2009

Transcript: Ugandan-American Filmmaker Discusses AIDS, Other Issues in Africa (CO.NX webchat transcript, February 19) (2615)

Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine, Ugandan-American filmmaker, photographer, director and actor, answered questions in a CO.NX webchat on February 19. He talked about how he addresses HIV/AIDS, race, poverty, war and other global issues through film.

Following is the transcript:

(begin transcript)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Bureau of International Information Programs
Webchat Transcript

A Ugandan American's Story

Guest: Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine
Date: February 19, 2009
Time: 2:30 a.m. EST (0730 GMT)

Webchat Moderator [Sarah]: Welcome to our chat! Mr. Mwine will be live on February 19 at 07:30 GMT, but we are taking your questions now.

Webchat Moderator [Tim]: Yvette Alta Raphael from South Africa wrote: Wow would Love to be part of this discussion as HIV is ravaging our country Yvette SA

Webchat Moderator [Tim]: Rico Michael Bradley from Indonesia wrote: Hi there, my name is Rico Michael Bradley, I am a film maker in Indonesia, and I am currently also is making a movie about AIDS with the intention to create discussion and understanding about the condition, theres seem to a negative understanding and a person who have AIDS seems to be always put to judgment as having done something bad or a victim of family cursed, and the whole alternative healing that promises to cure to virus..so many eyes needs to be opened. I would really love to get some inputs, I am looking forward to join the chat. thanks for setting this up, and I hope this is a beginning of other events such as this.. God bless you all.

Webchat Moderator [Tim]: Komal Sahu from India wrote: I live in Mumbai and work with children who are orphaned by this virus and are infected themselves. We find it difficult to get counsellors to speak to these children. I would love to know if there is a medium that can raise the topic of HIV and bring hope and awareness of the disease and deals with life with HIV for these kids.

Webchat Moderator [Tim]: Welcome to our chat! Mr. Mwine will be live on February 19 at 07:30 GMT, but we are taking your questions now.

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: Thanks so much for being with us today. Please continue to submit your questions for Mr. Mwine. We will begin shortly.

Comment [IRC Kampala 2]: Good morning, am Neil Frank Yiga from Kampala

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: Hello and welcome!

Comment [IRC kampala 4]: Hello we are kiragga fredrick and james from kampala

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: Mr. Mwine is just getting logged in now. He will be online momentarily.

Comment [IRC Kampala 3]: HULLO I am KALUUBA FLORENCE from KAMPALA a teacher trainer, training youth 75% teen mothers for employment and job making opportunity

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: Welcome!

Answer [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: Hello everyone! Glad we are able to connect on this world wide web chat. I am currently writing to you from Los Angeles, California. Glad to see that is Uganda is so well represented in the group thus far. I hope to be there in June/July. Perhaps we can meet in person then. In the meantime I am looking forward to answering your questions here.

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: We see your questions coming in, thank you! Mr. Mwine is reviewing them now from his location in Los Angeles, California. Your moderators are located in Washington, D.C.

Question [susan]: Mr. Mwine, thanks for the great work you are doing in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Where in Uganda can I get your film documentaries? I have only seen the 'Tree in the seed'. How much do they cost? How have ugandans been

benefitting from your documentaries and theater? Have you other information dissemination media that you have been using to pass on HIV/AIDS messages?
Thanks

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: The films *Biro* and *Beware of Time* are not yet available on DVD in Uganda. But they are available for purchase through my website <http://www.bewareoftime.com/>.

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: You can watch Mr. Mwine's "Beware of Time" movie trailer at <http://www.cinematolibrestudio.com/trailers/biro.mov>

Comment [IRC Kampala 6]: I am Harriet from Kampala; happy to join Ntare for this webchat.

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: Hello Harriet, welcome to our chat. Mr. Mwine is working on everyone's questions now.

Comment [IRC Kampala]: Hello Ntare, I'm from Uganda and name is Mukasa Abdul Nassar councilor LCIII Makindye division Kampala. It's nice to hear the wonderful work you are doing

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: Welcome to the webchat.

Q [Zubedah Nanfuka]: I have great respect for Mr. Ntare and his contribution towards fighting HIV/AIDS. His focus on theatre and film production as a way of reaching out is definitely spot on, and timely in a world that is increasingly becoming more visual by the day. This coincides with a research paper for my masters thesis on the journalists' role in fighting HIV/AIDS in Uganda, where we now have active journalists publicly mobilizing support and awareness about the disease through their personal experiences. My question therefore, is does he think that professionals, in their respective fields can make a difference in regards to the HIV/AIDS matter or is this something, that is best left to government health ministries to combat at national level?. Thanks. Zubedah Nanfuka

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: Zubedah congrats on the pursuit of your Masters in journalism. I believe that wherever there is a will there is a way. So everyone can make a difference!

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: While we wait for Mr. Mwine to address your questions, please feel free to vote in our poll.

Q [Lee]: Hello Mr. Mwine! Were you born in US? Have you travelled to Africa and to Uganda?

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: Hi Lee. I was born in Hanover, New Hampshire which is in the U.S. Both of my parents have since returned to Uganda and I have been fortunate to visit them quite often over the years.

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: To learn more about AIDs prevention and AIDs in Africa, please see the transcript of our webchat with Dr. Amita Gupta. We discussed
Page | 20

AIDs with her on World Aids Day. <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2008/December/20081202142659xjsnommis9.777468e-02.html>

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: We see your many questions coming in...Mr. Mwine is working as quickly as he can to answer as many as he can.

Q [IRC kampala 4]: How can people under taking research in HIV/AIDs be helped as in getting the latest informatoin on HIV/AIDs?

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: If you have access to the internet that is a wonderful place to start your research. Another great resource as you may already know is TASO, which has offices in many parts of Uganda

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: More information on President Obama's HIV/AIDS plan can be found here: <http://nationalaidsstrategy.org/OBAMAFactSheetAIDS.pdf>

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: Here is a link to President Obama's Africa policy:<http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/January/20090115150627WCyeroCO.4203455.html?CP.rss=true> and <http://www.america.gov/world/africa.html>

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: The TASO site can be found at <http://www.tasouganda.org/>

Q [IRC Kampala 5]: Tyaba Charles, I am of the architects in the effort to establish a professional film industry in Uganda, how can we collabolate with film makers in America especially in promoting and protecting their films from piracy?

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: Mira Nair set up a film lab in Uganda that aims to do create the collaboration you mentioned. <http://www.maishafilmlab.com/>.

Comment [IRC Kampala 5]: Chris here. Wow, if you were born in New Hampshire then I must commend you for mimicking that thick kinyankole accent in your play Biro. Bravo!

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: If New Hampshire is new to you, take a look at their visitor's site to learn more: <http://www.visitnh.gov/>

Q [IRC Kampala 2]: Hello Mr. Mwine, glad to be a part of this webchat. Neil Frank here, I've been doing sensitisations on HIV/AIDS, especially prevention techniques specifically the 'Be a man' campaign under the organisation of Young Empowered and Healthy [YEAH], an initiative by the Uganda AIDS Commission with other partners funded by USAID, and we've noticed that the spread of HIV/AIDS especially here in Uganda is escallating because of Male gender norms...most of them traditional. For example "Being a 'real man' means having several sexual partners". Did you happen to have any videos on addressing the issue of masculinity as a contributor to the spread of the pandemic?

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: Hi Neil, my play BIRO is the closest thing I have that addresses the issue of masculinity as a contributor to the spread of the pandemic. As

you may know, the character in the play tried to be "a real man" and he ends up paying a high price for it.

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: I see from the excellent questions that many of you are working to prevent the spread of AIDS and to help those with AIDS. What are some of the challenges you have faced? Do you use art, film, or theater in your work?

Comment [IRC Kampala]: Mr. Ntare you are doing wonderful work and don't think your services are more needed in developing countries than elsewhere in the world and what have you done about it.

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: Thank you for the kind words about my work. I try to balance my time in both the developing countries and elsewhere in the world. It has been a tricky balancing act. But I am working to continue building bridges.

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: You can learn more about AIDS in Africa here <http://www.avert.org/aidsinafrica.htm>

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: Specific information on Uganda and AIDS is here: <http://www.avert.org/aidsuganda.htm>

Q [IRC kampala 4]: Don't you think it is very unfair to advocate for family planning while AIDS is claiming humanity to depletion?

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: Do you all agree? Feel free to submit your comments and opinions.

Q [IRC Kampala 6]: Mr Ntare, does your work address the socioeconomic constraints affecting women and girls particularly as regards the HIV pandemic? In Africa women account for 60% of the total infections. Mainly due to inability to negotiate if, when and whether and how they should have sex.

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: Great question. On average most of the participants I have worked with when conducting workshops in various parts of Africa have been women. I think it would be safe to say that more than 60% of the workshop participants have been women. This has made for a very rich exchange having the women in the majority.

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: To learn more about partnerships between American universities and Africa in combating HIV/AIDS, go to: <http://www.america.gov/st/health-english/2009/February/20090116144136abretnuh0.688741.html?CP.rss=true>

Comment [IRC Kampala]: Its not unfair to advocate for family planning while AIDS is claiming. Its important to have a sizeable number of people that can be well managed, cared for other than having to many people where there is less services for all. Few sizeable numbers enables the government to plan for its people.

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: Based on the interest in HIV/AIDS prevention and the many questions coming in, we will look to schedule additional webchats on this topic. Are there particular aspects of HIV/AIDS prevention and care that would be of most interest to you in terms of the speakers we select?

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: Thanks for your thoughts.

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: Also, there are some film makers in the audience today, are you interested in future webchats on the topic of film production?

Q [IRC kampala 4]: Don't you think life prolonging drugs are a hurdle to the fight against HIV/AIDS?

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: I believe that having access to life prolonging drugs for those who are living with HIV is more of a benefit than a hurdle in the fight against HIV/AIDS

Comment [IRC Kampala 5]: This is a comment for Kristin the moderator from Chris Ocamringa. I don't think it is unfair to advocate for family planning when Aids is depleting the human race because Aids can be avoided. Even if we encouraged people to procreate, they would also be wiped out by HIV/AIDS. It's better that we deal with HIV separately!

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: Thanks for sharing, Chris!

Q [Lee]: As an actor in Hollywood, do you help tell the story of Africa to your friends and other actors? Are they interested in learning about this continent?

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: I do try and tell the stories of Africa even while working in Hollywood. In fact my latest job was on the TV show HEROES. I play an African role in the show whose super power is that he can paint the future. You can view previous episodes online at <http://www.nbc.com/Heroes/>. I shot ten episodes in season three.

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: Please feel free to share your thoughts on future chats by voting in our poll. If a topic you are interested is not listed, please submit it to us. Thanks!

Q [IRC Kampala]: COUNSELLING IS VITAL THING IN FIGHTING HIV/AIDS HOW WILL THE PLAY HELP THE PATIENTS AND COUNSELORS

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: In my play BIRO, the character says "If you are hiding meat from the fire, how will you roast it" This is an attempt to push any patient or counselor who may be hiding to keep the fight going!

Q [IRC kampala 4]: Any significant impact you have seen in your documentaries bring reduction in HIV/AIDs in developing world?

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: I have not seen any studies on how the documentaries I made have affected the pandemic. However, what I have seen is

how the play opened up dialogue on a number of issues that had been swept under the rug.

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: Please join our facebook page at <http://co-nx.state.gov> (<http://co-nx.state.gov/>) to learn more about upcoming programs. You can also give us feedback on this program. We are so glad that you have joined us today. Mr. Mwine will answer a few more questions.

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: We will look at hosting more sessions to address the topics you are raising today including HIV/AIDS and the film industry questions.

Q [IRC kampala 4]: Clarify on the issue of discordance, which still beats the understanding of many researchers globally?

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: This one is beyond my realm of expertise. It seems to have baffled quite a few people. But as the saying goes it is better to be safe than sorry. So always take preventative measures!

Comment [IRC Kampala]: Hi, well done I am Mbajja, the adherence officer JCRC, Mengo.

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: Thanks for joining us today! Mr. Mwine is working on some final answers.

Q [IRC Kampala]: Mr. Ntare, from you experience as film maker in making a difference in HIV/AIDS, what do you consider to be your greatest strength in fighting HIV/AIDS in Africa

A [Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine]: I think my strength is my curiosity. I am infinitely curious and hopeful. I will quote one of the women who was in a workshop I conducted in Gulu a number of years ago who said. "To me HIV means Hope Is Vital" Thank you all for participating in this webchat. I am sorry I wasn't able to answer all of your wonderful questions. I hope we get to continue the conversation another time. Perhaps in the virtual world now that we have met in cyberspace. I am now signing off till the next time we meet.

Peace & love, Ntare

Webchat Moderator [Kristin]: Thanks so much for joining us, Mr Mwine!

Comment [IRC Kampala]: Thank u

Webchat Moderator [Mark]: The Webchat is now closed. We wish to thank Mr. Mwine for joining us today. A transcript of today's webchat will be posted to <http://co-nx.state.gov> (<http://co-nx.state.gov/>) and to <http://www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html> within one business day. Speakers are chosen for their expertise and may not reflect the views of the U.S. Department of State.

(end transcript)

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

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*WPD410 02/19/2009

Transcript: State Department Daily Press Briefing

(Acting deputy spokesman Gordon K. Duguid briefs reporters February 19) (3605)

(begin transcript)

U.S. Department of State

Daily Press Briefing Index

Thursday, February 19, 2009

12:36 p.m. EST

Briefer: Gordon K. Duguid, Acting Deputy Spokesman

ECUADOR

- U.S. Troubled By Expulsion of Second American Diplomat
- Rejects Any Suggestion of Wrong Doing by Embassy Staff
- U.S. Has Responded in a Forthright and Open Fashion Regarding Questions and Concerns
- U.S. Hopes the Government of Ecuador will Reconsider its Actions

KYRGYZSTAN

- Kyrgyz Parliament Has Voted the Bill Out of Committee which is the First Step
- U.S. Embassy was Officially Informed of Parliamentary Vote
- Next Step for Kyrgyz President to Sign Law/Kyrgyz President has not Taken Such Action
- U.S. Still in Discussions with Kyrgyz Government
- Pentagon has Contingency Plans/Manas Air Base is Currently Operational
- Disposition of Manas Air Base will not Affect U.S. Operations in Afghanistan

AFGHANISTAN

- U.S. Expects Allies to Do More as U.S. Increases Troop Levels in Afghanistan
- U.S. in Discussion with Allies/Allies Have Stepped Up in the Past
- U.S. Review Panel/Invited an Pakistani Delegation and an Afghan Delegation to Have Input in the Review Process
- Foreign Ministers will Lead Their Delegations

PAKISTAN

- Directions of Events in Swat Valley Not Going in a Positive Way
- U.S./Amb. Holbrooke Has Spoken to Pakistanis
- Working Towards a Way to Address This Common Problem/Part of Review

EGYPT

- U.S. Welcomes the Release of Ayman Nour/Viewed as a Positive Step by Egyptian Authorities

TURKEY

-- Turkey a Valued Ally/U.S. Has Ongoing Plans to Come to Successful Conclusion of U.S. Operations in Iraq/Refer to DOD on Operational Details

BAHRAIN

-- U.S. Recognizes a Sovereign Bahrain/Bahrain a Major Ally/U.S. Supports Bahrain Territorial Integrity

SAUDI ARABIA

-- U.S. Commends on Appointment of Saudi Woman to Saudi Government

NORTH KOREA

-- Sec. Clinton's Recent Comments on North Korea Leadership Represent Opinion of State Department

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2009

(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

12:36 p.m. EST

MR. DUGUID: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to begin with a statement, if I may.

The decision by the Government of Ecuador to expel a second American diplomat is very troubling and raises serious concerns about Ecuador's desire to maintain a productive relationship.

The United States rejects any suggestion of wrongdoing by Embassy staff. Our Embassy personnel have acted with the utmost respect for Ecuador's sovereignty. Our programs have been administered in a transparent and accountable fashion, with the full cooperation of Ecuador's senior officials.

Whenever questions or concerns have been raised by the Government of Ecuador, we have responded in a forthright and open fashion. In regard to recent events, we made clear to the Foreign Ministry that we believed that we could resolve the issues raised by the Government of Ecuador in an amicable fashion. Our ambassador was scheduled to meet with the vice minister on Wednesday to present a proposal that we believe would have addressed the Government of Ecuador's concerns.

Regrettably, the Government of Ecuador rejected our efforts to resolve this issue through diplomatic channels, and instead held a press conference and announced the expulsion of our diplomat.

The cooperation that the United States and Ecuador have fashioned over time in the fight against drug trafficking, terrorism, trafficking in people, has had positive dividends for both of our countries. We hope the Government of Ecuador will

reconsider its actions and return to a dialogue designed to enhance our cooperation on issues of mutual importance and increasing relevance in this vital region.

Thank you. Questions?

QUESTION: Do you plan any retorsion measures?

MR. DUGUID: We're reviewing our options at the moment.

QUESTION: This is the Sullivan case?

MR. DUGUID: Yes, it is. It is both the diplomats expelled this month. It is the same and ongoing situation.

Yes.

QUESTION: Change of subject?

MR. DUGUID: Anybody else? I was fairly clear on that? Okay, please. Bob.

QUESTION: Have you received an expulsion notice yet from the Kyrgyz Government?

MR. DUGUID: No, we haven't.

QUESTION: Or any other communication?

MR. DUGUID: Well, we've received the communication, of course, that the parliament has voted the bill out of committee. And that is the first step. The next step is for the president to sign that into law, and then that would be communicated to us through a diplomatic note. Those last two things have not yet happened, and we are still in discussion with the government while we see if the president will take those actions.

Meanwhile, of course, we have contingency plans. The Pentagon has a heroic section of contingency planners, and we do have options that we are reviewing in case the president does decide to sign this legislation. But despite the parliament's move, we are not quite there yet.

QUESTION: So you're not going to just walk away from it until they tell you you have to leave?

MR. DUGUID: The base is operational today, and I expect it to be operational at least for another six months. That is, you know, the time period stipulated in our agreement. Know we are still in discussion with them and we will stay until we get a final – in discussion till we get their final decisions.

QUESTION: So the offer you referred to yesterday remains on the table?

MR. DUGUID: I believe Secretary Gates has addressed this. I believe he's in Krakow now, but he did come out and say that, yes, indeed that's the case.

Okay. Yes, please. Stay on the subject, please.

QUESTION: When do you believe the 180 days starts? Is it when they sign it or when they notify you about it?

MR. DUGUID: I believe the --

QUESTION: Or has it already because of the parliamentary action?

MR. DUGUID: No, I believe that it is the official notification when the government actually signs this into law. I'll have to ask for, you know, a --

QUESTION: Which one? When they notify you or when they -- when the president signs it?

MR. DUGUID: When it becomes their law.

QUESTION: So when the president signs --

MR. DUGUID: It's not signed into law yet. So I can double-check on that for you. It has not yet been signed by the president, and so I do not believe that we have entered the 180-day period. I am not, however, one of the negotiators, so I should reserve some margin of error. And if I'm not well informed about that, I'll get right back to you after the briefing.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. DUGUID: Okay? Same subject?

QUESTION: Yes, same subject.

MR. DUGUID: Yes, please.

QUESTION: So during that 180-day period after you do -- if you, in fact, do receive the notification, then the -- will the base be being drawn down, as it were, during that time? Or will all the activities that had been taking place there, and others perhaps, continue?

MR. DUGUID: That's an operational question for the Department of Defense. They have, as I noted, contingency plans that they always keep up-to-date. They are looking at our options. Those options will be presented up through the chain of command, and a decision will be taken as need be. But it will be for the whole range of decisions, either staying or having to make preparations to go.

Same subject? Yes, please.

QUESTION: Can you give us a sense of how it's going to affect your operations in Afghanistan?

MR. DUGUID: Not one whit. We will be able to continue our operations in Afghanistan fully and completely. The Pentagon is renowned for its ability to move troops, equipment, and other materiel to all parts of the world.

QUESTION: A follow-up on this?

MR. DUGUID: Same question?

QUESTION: According to General David McKiernan, NATO's top (inaudible) in Afghanistan, what do you expect from NATO and EU countries to do more to this effect?

MR. DUGUID: I'm sorry. Would you please repeat?

QUESTION: I said your general in Afghanistan, Mr. --

MR. DUGUID: General McKiernan.

QUESTION: Your general, top general, David McKiernan.

MR. DUGUID: Yes, General McKiernan.

QUESTION: Stated yesterday that NATO's (inaudible) in Afghanistan stopped (inaudible) wanting to do more. So what do you expect more from NATO and the EU countries to do?

MR. DUGUID: The United States, as you've noticed over the last couple of days --

QUESTION: Yes.

MR. DUGUID: -- the President has signed a directive that increases U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan.

QUESTION: 17, yes.

MR. DUGUID: We are going to do more in Afghanistan. Yes, we also expect our allies to also do more. We're in discussions with the allies about that. NATO minister -- defense ministers are meeting this week. They -- I believe it is today and tomorrow. There will also be other meetings that we'll have with our allies to discuss what more that we can all do to confirm our commitment to the Afghans and their attempt to build a new democracy in South Asia, and how we can better serve all of our interests by looking at the range of activities that go into that.

As you know, Ambassador Holbrooke has just returned from the region. The review panel, the U.S. review panel, met yesterday for the first time and will now -- in, I believe the period is 60 days -- come up with the U.S. proposals on what we can do better in Afghanistan. We will, of course, share that with our allies. In fact, we are also inviting the Pakistani delegation to have input into that review process and an Afghan delegation to have input into that review process.

QUESTION: They're going to be here next week.

MR. DUGUID: They will be here next week. So --

QUESTION: The minister – the foreign minister --

MR. DUGUID: Yeah. Sorry, I'll just finish with Mr. Lambros.

QUESTION: Sorry.

MR. DUGUID: We will then have a range of things that we can discuss with our allies. Our allies have stepped up to the plate in the past. NATO has increased its operations and taken over more PRTs over, you know, the past ten years or so. So I don't think we're on, you know--

QUESTION: Any response so far to this from NATO, the European Union, and Europe in general?

MR. DUGUID: I don't have one for you that they haven't already espoused in public.

Yes, Elise, please.

QUESTION: If you could just – on those meetings next week. It'll be with the foreign ministers, and they're going to meet with --

MR. DUGUID: The foreign ministers are leading the delegations, yes.

QUESTION: And they'll meet with Secretary Clinton? Do you know – and --

MR. DUGUID: They will meet – I don't have their schedule yet and the meetings that they will have. They will meet with the review panel itself --

QUESTION: Okay. And --

MR. DUGUID: -- and that will be composed, you know, according to how the co-chairs arrange it. When we have more details, I'll be happy to share those.

QUESTION: I just have one more on – could you say something about the release of Ayman Nour?

QUESTION: Can I stay on this real quick? Sorry.

QUESTION: Yes, can we --

MR. DUGUID: Stay – I'll get to the release, but – same subject?

QUESTION: Yes, this is on the meetings next week. Can you tell us a little bit more about – Ambassador Holbrooke said last night that the military – Pakistani military would be represented. Do you know exactly who is coming? And then, is anybody from ISI going to be coming as well?

MR. DUGUID: I don't have that information for you. I do know that the foreign ministers will be leading their delegations. The rest of the delegation is not yet – has not been enumerated to me.

QUESTION: Where is it going to take place?

QUESTION: May I go back to Kyrgyzstan for a second?

MR. DUGUID: Pardon me, just one at a time and I'll be better off doing this, because we've got a lot of area to cover today.

Yes, please.

QUESTION: Where is this meeting going to take place? In D.C.?

MR. DUGUID: In – well, it'll take place in Washington. I don't know if it'll be in the State Department or in the NSC. I presume that it'll take place in a room that is commodious enough for all of the participants. But where that building will be, I don't know yet.

On the same subject?

QUESTION: Yes.

MR. DUGUID: I'll come back to --

QUESTION: Do you have specific dates for that yet?

MR. DUGUID: No, I don't.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. DUGUID: No, I don't. And back to Kyrgyz?

QUESTION: Yes, mine's on Kyrgyz.

MR. DUGUID: I'll come back to you, okay. Yes.

QUESTION: I believe you referred to some communication. You said we received communication on the --

MR. DUGUID: The parliamentary vote. Yes.

QUESTION: You referred to the communication from your Embassy --

MR. DUGUID: Our Embassy was informed officially of the parliamentary vote.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. DUGUID: Okay? And --

QUESTION: Ambassador Holbrooke last night --

MR. DUGUID: Yes.

QUESTION: -- on PBS said the United States doesn't like to see the Pakistani Government ceding territory to bad guys, referring to the Swat Valley deal. Is that the way that the government is characterizing it, that the Pakistanis have ceded some of their territory to the Taliban?

MR. DUGUID: I think if I read the -- you know, the transcript correctly, what we're -- what we're talking about is these types of deals have happened before. The direction of events in the Swat Valley are not going in a positive way. What we do want to see is results. We have spoken to the Pakistanis. The Ambassador has spoken to the Pakistanis. They understand that the threat of terrorism is a threat to them as well as to us. What we're working towards is a way that we can all address this common problem. That is part of our review. That is part of what we'll be talking to the Pakistanis about when the delegation arrives here.

Yes, please, Nina.

QUESTION: Still on Pakistan.

MR. DUGUID: Still on Pakistan.

QUESTION: We've had confirmation from a couple of officials that Kayani and Zardari essentially turned a blind eye to these drone attacks. Do you have any comment on that?

MR. DUGUID: I refer you to DOD for anything that has to do with operational details.

Elise.

QUESTION: The release of Ayman Nour?

MR. DUGUID: Yes. We welcome the release of Ayman Nour, especially as it's been done on medical grounds, and we view this as a positive step by the Egyptian authorities. The United States has called for this release many times in the past, and therefore, it is a good and positive move.

Yes, Sylvie.

QUESTION: Do you see -- do you see that as a gesture of goodwill before the trip of the Secretary at the beginning of March --

MR. DUGUID: I see it as a move based on the medical grounds that is positive in and of itself. It is a good thing to do.

QUESTION: Did either George Mitchell or the Secretary in her meeting with Aboul Gheit last week raise this case specifically?

MR. DUGUID: Our discussions with the Egyptians are discreet, and we will keep them that way. Thank you.

QUESTION: But you have, though, in the past sometimes said that – when officials have --

MR. DUGUID: We have in the past, in public, made these calls. And diplomatic discussions will remain discreet, but we have said this publicly a number of times.

Yes, Mr. Lambros.

QUESTION: On Turkey. Gordon, according to today's report, Turkey is going to play a prominent role as U.S. begins to remove thousands of tons of equipment and supplies from Iraq over the next year or so. Any comment on that?

MR. DUGUID: Turkey is a valued ally, and we have ongoing plans about the President's order to wind up, or at least come to a successful conclusion to, our operations in Iraq. I refer you to DOD for the status of those plans.

QUESTION: Diplomatically, do you know, in terms of these U.S. weapons, supplies are going to be abandoned in Turkey, as you did after the end of the World War, implementing (inaudible) this time by the then-U.S. Ambassador to Ankara Morton Abramowitz?

MR. DUGUID: Mr. Lambros, I refer you to DOD for operational details of their planning on Iraq.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. DUGUID: Next question, please.

Yes, Samir.

QUESTION: Do you have any comments about the provocations by Iran to Bahrain claiming that Bahrain is part of Iran?

MR. DUGUID: Well, we've seen press reports of these claims. I can only speak for the United States that we recognize the sovereignty of Bahrain. We recognize its international borders. It is a major ally of the United States, and we support their territorial integrity. But as the only thing I have seen are press reports, I can't further comment on their source or if the quotes made were accurate or not.

Yes, please.

QUESTION: This is on Security Council reforms. A debate is going on at the UN today.

MR. DUGUID: Yes.

QUESTION: What is the new Administration's position on the reforms in the Security Council and expansion of its permanent members and non-permanent members?

MR. DUGUID: The United States believes that the long-term legitimacy and viability of the UN Security Council depends on its reflecting the world of the 21st century. We will make serious and deliberate efforts in consulting with key allies and capitals to find a way forward on reform that enhances the ability of the Security Council to carry out its mandate effectively and to meet the challenges of the new century. The United States is not linking, however, Security Council reform with other aspects of UN reform.

QUESTION: The previous administration had supported Japan's candidacy for Security Council membership. Does it stand for the new Administration or --

MR. DUGUID: We're going to take into account the ability of all countries to contribute to global security. And when we have a position for the Administration, we'll be happy to share that as we go on further with these discussions.

And someone who has not -- okay, Sylvie, come back up, and then we'll go back. Yes.

QUESTION: Do you have any comment about this new report of the IAEA on Iran still enriching uranium? And on Syria also, the presence of uranium on Syrian soil, do you have a comment?

MR. DUGUID: I saw some information just before I came to the podium. And I'm going to take the question for you. And we'll get a response, a written response, posted for you on that.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. DUGUID: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: On Ecuador, do you have any update to the situation of the U.S. official expelled by the Ecuadorian Government?

MR. DUGUID: He is preparing to leave. He is -- I had a statement that I read at the top of the briefing, and we'll release a copy of that statement when the briefing is finished.

Yes, please.

QUESTION: Ukrainian Prime Minister Tymoshenko publicly stated at the Munich Security Conference that her government sent letters appealing for emergency loans to a number of countries -- U.S., Russia, China, Japan, and the European Union -- to cover for the shortfall money in the budget for this year.

Robert Wood addressed this issue approximately a week ago. And I was just wondering if you have update on that, if you are ready to provide them with this money. What's the status of the -- you know, of this --

MR. DUGUID: I don't have an update for you. If I do, I'll --

QUESTION: Would you take this question?

MR. DUGUID: -- I'll get that to you. We'll take the question and we'll get that to you.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. DUGUID: Yes, please. Samir.

QUESTION: Do you have any comments about the changes made in the Saudi Government on appointing a woman for the first time?

MR. DUGUID: The move is extremely welcome, and we commend the Saudi Government for that appointment. The changes are, of course, a matter for the Saudi people themselves, rather than for us to comment on. But the inclusion of a woman in the Saudi Government for the first time is a positive step.

Yes.

QUESTION: During her trip, Secretary Clinton mentioned about the post Great Leader Kim Jong-il in North Korea, in Seoul. Recently, there was some news report about the North Korean succession. So does the U.S. Government recognize that there is any changes of the leadership in the North Korea?

MR. DUGUID: I think we've said many times that the leadership and how decisions are made in North Korea is a very -- it's an opaque process on how they take their decisions. Who is actually taking decisions is very opaque as well. We don't have any direct contact on the ground and are not able to well judge what we hear coming out of North Korea. However, I'd leave the Secretary's statements to stand for themselves. She did express the opinion of the State Department.

Yes.

QUESTION: This is a couple of days ago, but in an interview she said there are requirements for space launches for any nation, and this is in reference to North Korea. I was just wondering what requirements she was referring to, the treaties or -

MR. DUGUID: Well, the -- I can -- on space launches, I'll have to take that. I'm not in a position to enumerate them.

On North Korea's part, however, there are UN Security Council resolutions that apply to missile launches, be whatever type of missile launch it is. And those, I believe, are what she was referring to.

Other questions? Well, thank you, everyone.

QUESTION: Thanks.

(The briefing was concluded at 12:56 p.m.)

(end transcript)

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*WPD411 02/19/2009

Text: Attorney General Holder at African-American History Month Program
(Says the study of black history is essential for understanding America) (2379)

(begin text)

U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, D.C.
February 18, 2009

REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC HOLDER AT THE
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH PROGRAM

Every year, in February, we attempt to recognize and to appreciate black history. It is a worthwhile endeavor for the contributions of African Americans to this great nation are numerous and significant. Even as we fight a war against terrorism, deal with the reality of electing an African American as our President for the first time and deal with the other significant issues of the day, the need to confront our racial past, and our racial present, and to understand the history of African people in this country, endures. One cannot truly understand America without understanding the historical experience of black people in this nation. Simply put, to get to the heart of this country one must examine its racial soul.

Though this nation has proudly thought of itself as an ethnic melting pot, in things racial we have always been and continue to be, in too many ways, essentially a nation of cowards. Though race related issues continue to occupy a significant portion of our political discussion, and though there remain many unresolved racial issues in this nation, we, average Americans, simply do not talk enough with each other about race. It is an issue we have never been at ease with and given our nation's history this is in some ways understandable. And yet, if we are to make progress in this area we must feel comfortable enough with one another, and tolerant enough of each other, to have frank conversations about the racial matters that continue to divide us. But we must do more- and we in this room bear a special responsibility. Through its work and through its example this Department of Justice, as long as I am here, must - and will - lead the nation to the "new birth of freedom" so long ago promised by our greatest President. This is our duty and our solemn obligation.

We commemorated five years ago, the 50th anniversary of the landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision. And though the world in which we now live is

fundamentally different than that which existed then, this nation has still not come to grips with its racial past nor has it been willing to contemplate, in a truly meaningful way, the diverse future it is fated to have. To our detriment, this is typical of the way in which this nation deals with issues of race. And so I would suggest that we use February of every year to not only commemorate black history but also to foster a period of dialogue among the races. This is admittedly an artificial device to generate discussion that should come more naturally, but our history is such that we must find ways to force ourselves to confront that which we have become expert at avoiding.

As a nation we have done a pretty good job in melding the races in the workplace. We work with one another, lunch together and, when the event is at the workplace during work hours or shortly thereafter, we socialize with one another fairly well, irrespective of race. And yet even this interaction operates within certain limitations. We know, by “American instinct” and by learned behavior, that certain subjects are off limits and that to explore them risks, at best embarrassment, and, at worst, the questioning of one’s character. And outside the workplace the situation is even more bleak in that there is almost no significant interaction between us. On Saturdays and Sundays America in the year 2009 does not, in some ways, differ significantly from the country that existed some fifty years ago. This is truly sad. Given all that we as a nation went through during the civil rights struggle it is hard for me to accept that the result of those efforts was to create an America that is more prosperous, more positively race conscious and yet is voluntarily socially segregated.

As a nation we should use Black History month as a means to deal with this continuing problem. By creating what will admittedly be, at first, artificial opportunities to engage one another we can hasten the day when the dream of individual, character based, acceptance can actually be realized. To respect one another we must have a basic understanding of one another. And so we should use events such as this to not only learn more about the facts of black history but also to learn more about each other. This will be, at first, a process that is both awkward and painful but the rewards are potentially great. The alternative is to allow, to continue the polite, restrained mixing that now passes as meaningful interaction but that accomplishes little. Imagine if you will situations where people – regardless of their skin color – could confront racial issues freely and without fear. The potential of this country, that is becoming increasingly diverse, would be greatly enhanced. I fear however, that we are taking steps that, rather than advancing us as a nation are actually dividing us even further. We still speak too much of “them” and not “us”. There can, for instance, be very legitimate debate about the question of affirmative action. This debate can, and should, be nuanced, principled and spirited. But the conversation that we now engage in as a nation on this and other racial subjects is too often simplistic and left to those on the extremes who are not hesitant to use these issues to advance nothing more than their own, narrow self interest. Our history has demonstrated that the vast majority of Americans are uncomfortable with, and would like to not have to deal with, racial matters and that is why those, black or white, elected or self-appointed, who promise relief in easy, quick solutions, no matter how divisive, are embraced. We are then free to retreat to our race protected cocoons where much is comfortable and where progress is not really made. If we allow this attitude to persist in the face of the most significant

demographic changes that this nation has ever confronted – and remember, there will be no majority race in America in about fifty years - the coming diversity that could be such a powerful, positive force will, instead, become a reason for stagnation and polarization. We cannot allow this to happen and one way to prevent such an unwelcome outcome is to engage one another more routinely - and to do so now.

As I indicated before, the artificial device that is Black History month is a perfect vehicle for the beginnings of such a dialogue. And so I urge all of you to use the opportunity of this month to talk with your friends and co-workers on the other side of the divide about racial matters. In this way we can hasten the day when we truly become one America.

It is also clear that if we are to better understand one another the study of black history is essential because the history of black America and the history of this nation are inextricably tied to each other. It is for this reason that the study of black history is important to everyone- black or white. For example, the history of the United States in the nineteenth century revolves around a resolution of the question of how America was going to deal with its black inhabitants. The great debates of that era and the war that was ultimately fought are all centered around the issue of, initially, slavery and then the reconstruction of the vanquished region. A dominant domestic issue throughout the twentieth century was, again, America's treatment of its black citizens. The civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's changed America in truly fundamental ways. Americans of all colors were forced to examine basic beliefs and long held views. Even so, most people, who are not conversant with history, still do not really comprehend the way in which that movement transformed America. In racial terms the country that existed before the civil rights struggle is almost unrecognizable to us today. Separate public facilities, separate entrances, poll taxes, legal discrimination, forced labor, in essence an American apartheid, all were part of an America that the movement destroyed. To attend her state's taxpayer supported college in 1963 my late sister in law had to be escorted to class by United States Marshals and past the state's governor, George Wallace. That frightening reality seems almost unthinkable to us now. The civil rights movement made America, if not perfect, better.

In addition, the other major social movements of the latter half of the twentieth century- feminism, the nation's treatment of other minority groups, even the anti-war effort- were all tied in some way to the spirit that was set free by the quest for African American equality. Those other movements may have occurred in the absence of the civil rights struggle but the fight for black equality came first and helped to shape the way in which other groups of people came to think of themselves and to raise their desire for equal treatment. Further, many of the tactics that were used by these other groups were developed in the civil rights movement.

And today the link between the black experience and this country is still evident. While the problems that continue to afflict the black community may be more severe, they are an indication of where the rest of the nation may be if corrective measures are not taken. Our inner cities are still too conversant with crime but the level of fear generated by that crime, now found in once quiet, and now electronically padlocked suburbs is alarming and further demonstrates that our

past, present and future are linked. It is not safe for this nation to assume that the unaddressed social problems in the poorest parts of our country can be isolated and will not ultimately affect the larger society.

Black history is extremely important because it is American history. Given this, it is in some ways sad that there is a need for a black history month. Though we are all enlarged by our study and knowledge of the roles played by blacks in American history, and though there is a crying need for all of us to know and acknowledge the contributions of black America, a black history month is a testament to the problem that has afflicted blacks throughout our stay in this country. Black history is given a separate, and clearly not equal, treatment by our society in general and by our educational institutions in particular. As a former American history major I am struck by the fact that such a major part of our national story has been divorced from the whole. In law, culture, science, athletics, industry and other fields, knowledge of the roles played by blacks is critical to an understanding of the American experiment. For too long we have been too willing to segregate the study of black history. There is clearly a need at present for a device that focuses the attention of the country on the study of the history of its black citizens. But we must endeavor to integrate black history into our culture and into our curriculums in ways in which it has never occurred before so that the study of black history, and a recognition of the contributions of black Americans, become commonplace. Until that time, Black History Month must remain an important, vital concept. But we have to recognize that until black history is included in the standard curriculum in our schools and becomes a regular part of all our lives, it will be viewed as a novelty, relatively unimportant and not as weighty as so called "real" American history.

I, like many in my generation, have been fortunate in my life and have had a great number of wonderful opportunities. Some may consider me to be a part of black history. But we do a great disservice to the concept of black history recognition if we fail to understand that any success that I have had, cannot be viewed in isolation. I stood, and stand, on the shoulders of many other black Americans. Admittedly, the identities of some of these people, through the passage of time, have become lost to us- the men, and women, who labored long in fields, who were later legally and systemically discriminated against, who were lynched by the hundreds in the century just past and those others who have been too long denied the fruits of our great American culture. The names of too many of these people, these heroes and heroines, are lost to us. But the names of others of these people should strike a resonant chord in the historical ear of all in our nation: Frederick Douglas, W.E.B. DuBois, Walter White, Langston Hughes, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, Charles Drew, Paul Robeson, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Vivian Malone, Rosa Parks, Marion Anderson, Emmet Till. These are just some of the people who should be generally recognized and are just some of the people to whom all of us, black and white, owe such a debt of gratitude. It is on their broad shoulders that I stand as I hope that others will some day stand on my more narrow ones.

Black history is a subject worthy of study by all our nation's people. Blacks have played a unique, productive role in the development of America. Perhaps the greatest strength of the United States is the diversity of its people and to truly understand this country one must have knowledge of its constituent parts. But an
Page | 39

unstudied, not discussed and ultimately misunderstood diversity can become a divisive force. An appreciation of the unique black past, acquired through the study of black history, will help lead to understanding and true compassion in the present, where it is still so sorely needed, and to a future where all of our people are truly valued.

Thank you.

(end text)

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*WPD412 02/19/2009

Transcript: Secretary Clinton's Interview with Asahi Shimbun in Tokyo
(Discusses North Korea, Six-Party Talks, U.S.-Japan-China relations) (1434)

(begin transcript)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesman

(Tokyo, Japan)

February 19, 2009

INTERVIEW

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
With Yoichi Funabashi and Yoichi Kato of Asahi Shimbun

February 17, 2009

Tokyo, Japan

QUESTION: Secretary Clinton, thank you very much. We really appreciate your sharing your precious time with us. Our first question is about North Korea. What would you say the biggest difference between your Administration's policy towards North Korea, particularly North Korean nuclear issue, and the previous administration's policy towards North Korea.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, the previous administration's policy changed, as you know, over time. And I think the ending policy – that we had to engage in the Six-Party Talks and even bilaterally with North Korea – is where they should have started, because I think that is exactly what we must do, and that we have to work closely with the other partners, particularly Japan and South Korea, and engage with China and Russia to bring influence to bear on North Korea to convince them that their pursuit of nuclear weapons is not acceptable and carries costs that are going to be quite high.

So we start from the premise that the Six-Party Talks are a good forum, and we will be appointing a successor envoy to Secretary Hill and engaging as broadly as we possibly can while trying to speak directly to the North Korean people and to the others in the government who are jockeying for position that there are benefits that they would obtain if they began to cooperate.

QUESTION: How do you put that – the human rights issues in this context, in this approach, then?

SECRETARY CLINTON: I believe that the agenda for the Six-Party Talks is a comprehensive one, denuclearizing in a verifiable and complete way, dealing with their missiles, and the human rights agenda, which includes the abductees.

QUESTION: I see. On China, there have been various concerns about China's military buildup in the region, and particularly the nuclear buildup. Since you have started to talk about, you know, the initiation – re-initiation of START and also desired ratification CTBT, how do you put that – China's nuclear buildup in this context?

SECRETARY CLINTON: That's an excellent question, and it is one of the issues I intend to discuss with the Chinese about the possibility of their becoming more involved in nonproliferation and arms control, as the Russians historically have been. China has a role that is important for them to play, and I hope that there will be an opportunity for us to begin negotiating on some of those issues.

QUESTION: I see. So you are trying to initiate a bilateral negotiation? Is the process to discuss about this issue between the U.S. and China in the coming months and years?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yes. It will be a discussion that can very well lead to some process.

QUESTION: I see. The U.S.-China-Japan – there have – some voices arguing for starting that new process among those three countries because, particularly on the global issues, there have emerged so much overlapping interests and concerns. And perhaps it is the right time for those three countries to get together to at least consult each other with those mutual interests and concerns. Do you agree to that?

SECRETARY CLINTON: I think that's an idea worth exploring. Certainly, Japan and China and the United States have a lot of concerns in common. As you know, China and Japan both have historically exported a lot of goods to the United States. In this economic crisis, they're both confronting some difficult decisions. The United States has a great desire in creating a cooperative relationship among China, Japan, and ourselves. So we will be asking both countries if there are such opportunities for a trilateral dialogue that we could perhaps look forward to.

QUESTION: Would it possibly include trilateral summits?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, this is one of these ideas that is just being born, so I think we have to see whether we can create a format that is acceptable to all three countries.

QUESTION: Specifically, in what way do you think that those three countries really should promote mutual understanding and explore the common approach with regard to the global warming, climate change issue?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I think that's a perfect example. Japan is further advanced than the United States and China in energy efficiency and clean energy technology. So creating a partnership among the three of us would benefit China and the United States, and economically benefit Japan. I think that helping China understand ways that it can lower emissions without undermining their economic growth, which is their big fear – you know, they look at Japan, how advanced Japan is. They look at the United States and they say, well, you know, we have a right to develop and give our people a higher standard of living. Well, they do. But it would be far better if they did so in a way that limited emissions and led to clean energy uses. Japan has so much to offer to China on that front. And we have partnerships that we can offer as well. So I think that's a perfect example for the kind of trilateral discussion that you referred to.

MR. WOOD: We have time for two more questions.

QUESTION: Two more questions. Thank you very much. Your predecessor, Secretary Rice, skipped twice in attending the ARF, ASEAN Regional Forum, due to, perhaps, some good reasons. But the East Asian – Southeast Asian country, the officials – politicians were a bit disappointed with the lack of presence on the part of the United States. What is your view of the United States presence and commitment to Southeast Asian countries, particularly regional (inaudible) there?

SECRETARY CLINTON: I think it's an important part of our global strategy to be involved with organizations like ASEAN. I certainly intend, whenever possible, to be at the regional meetings where the United States is invited to participate. And I hope that we can create even closer cooperation between the United States and the ASEAN countries.

QUESTION: Are you planning to also participate in East Asian summit for United States?

SECRETARY CLINTON: That I'm not as familiar with, so I will have to look at that. I know the timing on the ASEAN summit. I don't know the timing on the East Asian summit.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, this is my last question. As you know, the Japanese politics has been disarray and this sort of political immobility in Japan actually has already hampered the Japanese Government from pursuing otherwise more perhaps dynamic, more forthcoming approaches and postures. Do you think that this problem already has actually given you some troubles, at least some constraints for you to explore that, you know, common approach with Japan?

SECRETARY CLINTON: I don't believe so. Of course, it is up to the Japanese people to determine their own political leadership. But I think that our alliance and partnership is durable, and it continues no matter who's in the White House in

Washington, and it continues no matter who is in charge here in Tokyo. And I want to underscore that, because as important as my ministerial meetings are, and I had excellent meetings today with the foreign minister and the defense minister, and I'm looking forward to my dinner with the prime minister, the people of Japan and the people of the United States have a close relationship. We have so many values in common. We have a view about how, you know, it's possible to improve life for everyone by working together and having economic growth and prosperity. So I see our relationship as being very fundamental, and we look forward to working with whomever the people of Japan choose as their leaders.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, thank you very much.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you.

QUESTION: Just one question for me, sir. –

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yes.

QUESTION: We are looking forward to welcoming new ambassador to Japan. And I understand Dr. Nye is a leading candidate. When is it – do you think it's going to be finalized and announced?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I cannot speak to that. That is a decision that is still being made. But as soon as it is made, we will announce it and be very eager to have our new ambassador be here in Tokyo.

QUESTION: It's going to be Dr. Nye?

SECRETARY CLINTON: I have no comment on that. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you very much.

(end transcript)

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NNNN

*WPD413 02/19/2009

Text: Statement on Ecuador's Expulsion of Second U.S. Diplomat
(U.S. rejects suggestion of wrongdoing by embassy staff) (277)

(begin text)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
February 19, 2009

STATEMENT BY GORDON K. DUGUID, ACTING DEPUTY SPOKESMAN

The Government of Ecuador's Expulsion of a Second U.S. Diplomat

The decision by the Government of Ecuador to expel a second American diplomat is very troubling and raises serious concerns about Ecuador's desire to maintain a productive relationship.

We reject any suggestion of wrongdoing by Embassy staff. Our Embassy personnel have acted with utmost respect for Ecuador's sovereignty. Our programs have been administered in a transparent and accountable fashion, with the full cooperation of Ecuador's senior officials.

Whenever questions or concerns have been raised by the Government of Ecuador, we have responded in a forthright and open fashion. In regard to recent events, we made clear to the Foreign Ministry that we believed we could resolve the issues raised by the Government of Ecuador. Our Ambassador was scheduled to meet with the Vice Minister on Wednesday, February 18, to present a proposal that we believe would have addressed the Government of Ecuador's concerns.

Regrettably, the Government of Ecuador rejected our efforts to resolve this issue through diplomatic channels and instead held a press conference and announced the expulsion of our diplomat.

The cooperation that the United States and Ecuador have fashioned over time in the fight against drug trafficking, terrorism, and trafficking in people has paid positive dividends for both countries. We hope the Government of Ecuador will reconsider its actions and return to a dialogue designed to enhance our cooperation on issues of mutual importance and increasing relevance in the region.

(end text)

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

NNNN

*WPD414 02/19/2009

Transcript: Secretary Clinton's Town Hall Meeting at University of Tokyo
(Commends Japan for its leadership in clean energy, climate change) (6150)

(begin transcript)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
(Tokyo, Japan)
February 19, 2009

REMARKS

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

Town Hall Meeting at the University of Tokyo

February 17, 2009

Tokyo, Japan

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, thank you very much. It is such an honor to be here at this great university, and I thank your president for his warm welcome and for his remarks about sustainability and gender equality.

I am delighted to be here at Todai to have this opportunity to exchange views with students and to hear your ideas and concerns. I'm also pleased to be here at a time when training is already underway for this year's World Baseball Classic. (Laughter.) It reminded me that 75 years ago, some legendary members of the New York Yankees toured Japan and drew huge and enthusiastic crowds. Now, as a former senator from New York and a lifelong Yankees fan, I want you to know that it's exciting that a baseball player by the name of Ruth came here in 1934, and a baseball player by the name of Matsui plays for the New York Yankees today.

Now, I've come to talk about many things beyond baseball – (laughter) – but I think it's important that we recognize the extraordinary work that the students at this university are involved in – those of you already studying, those of you old enough to have celebrated Coming of Age Day a few weeks ago, those of you taking exams this month in hopes of joining this great university, and those of you who will be graduating soon.

I had the opportunity to meet several of the students before I came in, and what I heard was very impressive: students looking for ways to help in international relations and on sustainability; the young man who has already spent a year in Afghanistan working with the Red Cross. There is so much that we look to you for, and I'm well aware that your generation will grapple with many serious issues. And part of my trip here today is to hear your views, because I believe strongly that we learn from listening to one another. And that is, for me, part of what this first trip of mine as Secretary of State is about.

I know that we are living in an age of fast-moving change. Our new president, President Obama, spoke about change. Well, change will happen whether we want it to or not. The challenge for us is to harness the forces of change and to make change work on behalf of a more sustainable, peaceful, progressive, and prosperous world.

When you think about the kind of changes that you have already lived through – today, advances in science and technology allow doctors to treat patients thousands of miles away, students to take university courses on their home computers, cars to run on electricity and biofuels, researchers to detect the tiniest particles of matter and see planets in the distant reaches of space.

But we also know that other advances can be used for more nefarious purposes: to organize the illicit trafficking of drugs or human beings across oceans and continents; to coordinate terror attacks, as the Mumbai terrorists did, using cell phones; to facilitate the sale, acquisition, and spread of weapons of mass destruction.

So we face an inescapable fact. Global problems require global solutions, none of which can be achieved by any one country alone. I believe strongly that our partnership, the United States and Japan, is at the center of the positive advances that we need to see more of as we move into the future. How do we come together to seize the opportunities of our interdependence and to address the challenges?

I've been talking a lot about what we call smart power, not only building new global networks or engaging in government-to-government interactions, but relying on the wisdom and the common sense of people around the world. In addition to my official meetings that I have held here in Japan, as well as those I will hold in Indonesia and South Korea and China, I want to stimulate more conversation with students and civic activists, with religious leaders and academics, with business people and others, who are striving to expand human rights, good governance, healthcare systems, educational opportunities, religious tolerance, and an end to hunger and poverty.

And America is ready to listen again. Too often in the recent past, our government has not heard the different perspectives of people around the world. In the Obama Administration, we intend to change that. And I hope that today is the beginning of a long and productive dialogue. Exercising smart power obliges us to be realistic about the world we inhabit. We must acknowledge our own contributions to global problems and then resolve to work as hard as possible to find solutions. And the world will need your help, not as bystanders or witnesses, but as active participants.

Let me talk briefly about three problems of particular urgency. First, the financial crisis. I realize that remaining optimistic is difficult when people across Japan, the United States, and indeed the world, are experiencing economic hardship. Now, we cannot wave a magic wand and be rid of the crisis that we face, and we certainly can't pretend that the problems don't exist. But we can find ways to act together.

In the United States, we have just passed a very significant stimulus package. We'll be working to correct the housing market problems and to restore the banking system. And I know that other nations, including yours, are similarly either taking or considering steps to jumpstart demand and stimulate their own economies. This is important. We need a coordinated, global response. We cannot afford to enter a contest to erect trade and other barriers. We have to remain committed to open and fair trade.

But in order to do that, we have to reassure our own people and people around the world that their leaders care about them, that we will work hard together to find answers. In an age of nuclear proliferation and terror, we have to think globally about security. Our relationship between the United States and Japan is enduring and unshakeable, but it requires constant action on the part of present and future generations. I'm pleased that today Foreign Minister Nakasone and I signed the Guam International Agreement, and we discussed broadly the other areas that we can cooperate in.

One of those was with respect to North Korea and its nuclear program. I have made it clear that the Obama Administration is committed to working through the Six-

Party Talks, and we will insist that North Korea completely and verifiably eliminate its nuclear weapons program. And earlier today, I had the honor of meeting with two of the families of Japanese citizens who were abducted to North Korea. This is also on the agenda of the Six-Party Talks.

And finally, I want to commend this university and your president for your emphasis on sustainability. We have just received a report that climate change is advancing more quickly than we had thought. We have to redouble our efforts to discover and use and bring to market scale available sources of clean energy. We do this to protect our health. We do this because our security demands it. We do this because if we are committed to a new energy future, it will create new jobs and spur more economic growth. And we do it because of our environment.

Japan is to be commended for your foresight and leadership. We're meeting in this green building, and it is a testament to the innovative spirit, not only at work in this university, but across Japan.

And I thank you, Mr. President, for your efforts in the field of global environmental engineering and in your leadership in pushing us toward a clean energy future. The president gave me a copy of his book about a vision for 2050. Now, I'm not sure that the President or I will be here to realize that vision – (laughter) – but the vast majority of you will be, and you have a great stake in making sure that it is a positive vision, it is a vision of what we can do together as a world committed to making a difference.

All of these are certainly challenges, but I prefer to think of them as opportunities. At this time in our history, many people are probably wondering: How can you be optimistic? Many of the concerns we face are grave ones, with deep implications for the quality of life and even the sustainability of our planet. But as President Obama said in his inaugural address, even in tough times, we must keep our eyes fixed on the road ahead and remember the strength and character that resides in free people to make decisions that will turn any situation around. There isn't any problem we face as human beings that we cannot address if we act in good faith and we remain determined and optimistic, and work hard.

I know that the futures that you face, individually and together, are part of the history of Japan. I started my day this morning at the Meiji Shrine, and was struck by the historical and religious significance. Here, at this great university, you walk through the Akamon, the red gate on campus that serves as a symbol of transition from the past to the future. You can use your educations at this great university to pass through a gateway of opportunity to help us create a more promising world. That is certainly what I believe and what I hope can be a message from our new Administration and our country to one of our friends, our partners, and our allies. The United States and Japan together can help to chart this new course, and it is imperative that we do so. The world is looking to us, the first and second largest economies – principled, creative, resilient, intelligent, determined. It is truly up to us, and I believe we are up to the challenge.

Thank you all for being here. (Applause.)

Now, I believe we are going to have an opportunity to talk. We have two students with microphones, so if you raise your hand, they will take turns (inaudible). We'll start here.

QUESTION: Thank you very much for a great speech. It's truly inspirational, and it's such an honor to have you here and to have an opportunity to meet you at the University of Tokyo. My name is Kai. I'm currently attending the graduate program on human security. I've always been a great fan of yours.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you.

QUESTION: My question is about U.S. sanctions against Burma, or Myanmar. The U.S. policy of imposing trade and investment sanctions against Myanmar does not seem to be making the Burmese Government realize that – what the people really need. And many have pointed out that this policy has been – this policy has been affecting American business interest and denies Burmese citizens the benefit of increased investment by American entities, multinational corporations that bring new technology, better working conditions and ideas that would help change the lives of the people over there. I thought, as a Burmese citizen, I am thankful that U.S. Government and the people care about our people and help promote human security in our country. My question is: What are the alternatives to – what do you think that the freedom of – political freedom and economic freedom can be effectively promoted and all those ordinary citizens' choices can be made more freely?

SECRETARY CLINTON: That's a very good question. And because we are concerned about the Burmese people, we are conducting a review of our policy. We're looking at what steps we could take that might influence the current Burmese Government, and we're also looking for ways that we could more effectively help the Burmese people.

As I said in a speech I gave at the Asia Society last week in New York, we want to see a time when citizens of Burma and the Nobel Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi can live freely in their own country. So we are taking seriously your challenge: What is it we could do that might work better? And I've spoken with many people already who are strong supporters of the Burmese people, who have all said let's look to see if there is a better way. So we are doing that, and I hope we will be able to arrive at a policy that can be more effective.

Thank you.

QUESTION: Good morning. Nice to meet you. (Laughter.) My name is Ken Sakakibara belonging to the department of engineering. Today, I want to know how you think about atomic energy, which is controversial topic because it is convenient energy source, but at the same time, there is possible danger of conversion into military technology and difficulty in nuclear disposal. I want to know how you think about this issue.

SECRETARY CLINTON: That's another very important question. Nuclear power poses a real dilemma. Let me ask you: How many of you believe there should be more

nuclear power for civilian energy uses? And how many of you are worried about the consequences of civilian nuclear power, even if you favor its use?

Part of the challenge is, it is a carbon-free form of energy. We have not yet figured out how to dispose of the waste. It is expensive to build nuclear power plants. So I think it is the kind of challenge that engineering students here at Todai should be taking on – (laughter) – to figure out how we could have safe, limited waste-producing nuclear power as a part of a new energy future.

Now, it is also the case that even civilian nuclear power in the hands of rogue regimes, like North Korea, creates the potential for misuse. And so the proliferation consequences of civilian power have to be carefully considered.

And I believe we should enter into any broad-based commitment to civilian nuclear power with all of these difficult questions in mind. There is a rush in some countries to build many more nuclear power plants. And on the one hand, that makes sense, given the need for energy and the reality that it is emission-free in the carbon sense. But let's try to use our best minds around the world to figure out how to harness the power of the atom in a way that doesn't create the potential for misuse, for waste. And that is the challenge to your generation, and so I would hope that engineering students would take that on because we need your – you know, we need your intelligence to deal with that.

QUESTION: I'm Kanako Kawasaki, a junior at the Faculty of Law. We often connect the fight against terrorism means the conflict between the West and Islam world. Are there any ideas to eliminate the prejudice towards Islamic world?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I believe that it is unfair for anyone to characterize the struggle against terrorism as being in any way prejudice against or conflict with the Islamic world. Every religion has people who misuse that religion. You know, I'm a Christian, and through the centuries we've had many people who have done terrible things in the name of Christianity. They have perverted the religion. And I think, similarly, you can look at what is happening in the world today and see that the misuse of Islam has led to extremists who have many agendas that they are promoting.

So I believe we have a responsibility to speak out and to work with the Muslim world on behalf of positive change and to enlist the help of Muslims around the world against the extremists. And it is very difficult in many parts of the world today to do that, but we should be determined and find ways to break through to speak directly to Muslims.

Now, President Obama gave his first interview to an Arab station, al-Arabiya. He spent time in his childhood in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country, which is where I will go tomorrow. And I think you will see from President Obama and those of us in his Administration a concerted effort to present a different position to the Islamic world without, in any way, stopping our efforts to prevent terrorism, which affects people from every walk of life. But this is one of the central security challenges we face as to how better to communicate in a way that gets through the

rhetoric and through the demagoguery and is heard by people who can make judgments about, you know, what we stand for and who we truly are.

If you look at the United States in the last decade, we have gone to war to protect Muslims in Bosnia and in Kosovo and in Afghanistan. We have sacrificed young men and women on behalf of the effort to prevent terrorization and ethnic cleansing and other horrors that were inflicted on Muslim populations. So I think that the war in Iraq made our argument more difficult, because although they just had peaceful elections, as you know, which they never would have had under Saddam Hussein, the process was extremely controversial. And the United States became involved in Iraq for a number of reasons, but it was viewed as wrong by many in the world, not just in the Muslim world. So we have to make clear that we will stand up for people's rights around the world and that we will stand up for the rights of Muslims around the world in order to provide a counter-story to the one that the extremists put out. So I hope that we can begin to eliminate the idea of prejudice or of any kind of attitude that would give comfort to the terrorists, and to isolate them as the extremists which they are.

One other point I would make, and it goes back to something the President said. In so many of these settings where you find the extremists, one of their goals is to prevent women from being educated and from having equality in their society. It is a part of their underlying agenda. And so for me personally, the struggle to win the war of ideas with the extremists has a lot to do with recognizing the human dignity of girls and women. And so I want to make that case and to provide an opportunity for other voices, particularly other Muslim voices, to join in saying the same thing.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Madame. Thank you for having – to have me. My name is Su Qiu from graduate program of sustainability science, originally from China. And as we see, the new U.S. Government has already demonstrated its leadership in many ways. And in your speech you also mentioned about the climate change issue. And I would like to know how are you going to demonstrate to your leadership in the future climate change negotiation, especially in the upcoming COP15 in Copenhagen? So thank you very much.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you. Well, one of the people who have come with me on this trip is our Special Envoy for Climate Change. The President and I decided we wanted to elevate the issue of climate change, because it had been neglected under the previous administration. And so we appointed a special envoy who will be negotiating in the lead-up to Copenhagen.

But we want to do more than that. We want to work on ways of creating bilateral relationships so that there are different approaches that countries can take, all aimed in the same direction. And let me take China as an example, because I will be talking about this along with Mr. Stern, our special envoy, with Chinese officials at the end of this week.

China has the goal of improving the standard of living of the Chinese people. And I think we would all agree, living in countries like Japan and the United States, that, you know, that is an important goal to try to give people a better life. But what we know today is that if Chinese people went through the same process of

industrialization and growth that the American and Japanese people did, then we would overload our environment with carbon-based emissions.

Now, historically, the United States is the biggest emitter of harmful emissions – carbon, mercury, and the like. But in the last year, China has exceeded, for the first time, the United States. So here's an opportunity for Japan and the United States to work in partnership with China to help them leapfrog over the harmful pattern of development. You know, Japan is, as you know, a leader in clean energy, and there is an opportunity for Japan, working with China, to help make buildings more energy efficient, to help create more energy efficient vehicles, and there is an opportunity for the United States to enter into partnerships with China.

So my hope is that we are able to work – Japan and the United States together with China – to encourage development, because it would be not only unfair, but it would not be productive for either Japan or China, or Japan and the United States, to go to China and say you can't develop, you know, we went through all that, we polluted the skies and then you have to clean it up, and we polluted our water and then you have to clean it up, so you can't do that, so you have to have a lower standard of living.

Well, those countries aren't going to say, oh, okay, we will do that. That's not going to happen. So instead, we need to come and say we want to help the Chinese people have a continually rising standard of living, and here are some ways we believe in partnership we can do it without adding to the emissions that are so harmful, and improving their economy at the same time.

Start thinking about manufacturing Japanese designs, start thinking about creating a market internally for clean energy and efficiency in houses and buildings of all kinds. That, to me, is the approach we should take, because if China and India don't join with us in our efforts to control emissions and begin to stop and reverse the damage to the earth from everything we have already done, I don't think we can achieve the sustainability goals that we must set for ourselves. So that's why I'm looking for that kind of honest partnership among the United States, Japan, and China.

Yes, over here. There's a young woman right there. Yes.

QUESTION: I'm Hanae Kondo, a major in natural environment. I belong to baseball club – (laughter.) I can't play as strong as boys. I want to know how as strong (inaudible) as strong as you. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I've played a lot of baseball – (laughter) – and I played with a lot of boys. (Laughter.) You know, I'm asked often by young women who are looking for a path to a future that is the one you want for yourself - how to do it and what to do. And it is very hard to come up with one answer for everyone, because we are all different – our family backgrounds, our interests and experiences. So the most important advice is to be true to yourself, to do what you believe is important and meaningful in your own life.

Now sometimes that will be a path that everyone around you thinks is perfectly suitable and sometimes it won't be. Sometimes it may not be what your parents

want for you or your friends want for you. But it is very important to try to stay as true to yourself as you can. And you're doing something right now, which will give you more options than most women in the world, by attending this great university. And education is still such a key to self-realization and fulfillment. It's true for young men as well as for young women.

When you think about all of the people in the world who are struggling just to survive, or you think about all of the schools that the Japanese Government and the Japanese people have built in Afghanistan - I saw the statistics today. You have built 500 schools for children in Afghanistan. And many of those schools were intended for girls. And in parts of Afghanistan today, it is dangerous for a young girl to go to school.

There was a terrible incident a few months ago where girls on their way to school were attacked by Taliban members and had acid thrown on them. And I saw an interview with one of the young girls - I don't know, she might have been 12 or 13 - now disfigured from some extremists who wanted to deny girls an education, who disfigured her. And all she could say was how anxious she was to continue her education.

So for young women like you and for myself, we've had more opportunities than our mothers or grandmothers. And it's important that we use our education, not just for our own benefit, but for society's as well. And from what I've heard, as many of you have stood up and talked about what you are studying, that is exactly what you intend to do. So be true to yourself, get the best education you can, stand up for yourself and your own dreams, even against some tough odds. I have some experience in that - (laughter) - and know that you can make a difference. You certainly can make a difference in the lives of those close to you, but you can also expand that difference far beyond. And I wish you well, as you make your decisions. And playing baseball from time to time keeps your - keeps your mind free. (Laughter.)

Let's see. Back here. Yes.

QUESTION: My name is Koichiro Kawaguchi, a senior at the Faculty of Law. My question is what challenges do you face to develop U.S.-Japan relations from a regional alliance to global partnership?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you. Well, I've been discussing the possibilities today with ministers in your government, and I will be meeting with your prime minister, who is the first foreign leader invited by President Obama to the White House. Prime Minister Aso, representing the government and the people of Japan, will meet with President Obama next week on February 24th, so that we obviously take very seriously the potential for deepening and broadening our relationship. Our security alliance will be 50 years old next week - before you were born - and it has been unshakeable between our two countries. We have extended deterrents to Japan as a way to deter attacks and to make it clear that the United States stands with Japan and is ready to defend Japan.

I signed an agreement today with the foreign minister about the relocation of Marines from Okinawa to Guam, as part of our efforts to modernize our military posture in the Pacific. But we also discussed how we can work together to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden, how we can combat terrorism by giving people a better opportunity - the work that Japan is doing in Afghanistan.

Japan will hold a conference to bring people from around the world together to decide how best to support Pakistan, which is a very important issue to both of our countries. Japan is working to support the Palestinians in the Middle East. Japan is working to help Africa develop. And I met with Ambassador Ogata and talked with her about the development aid that Japan is providing. So Japan is already deeply involved in working with other nations on a bilateral basis and a multilateral basis. And I'm looking for new opportunities to further that relationship, one we just talked about: clean energy and efficiency and climate change with China.

But I think there are a number of ways that we can be creative. There are a lot of student exchanges. Some of the students that I met earlier said that they might go to the United States for graduate work. And I think that we've had a very rich education exchange between Japan and the United States going back years. The Fulbright Program, the Japanese Education Exchange Program. There are just so many opportunities.

But we should be looking for new ways that, particularly young people from our two countries, can work together on development projects or clean energy projects. Because as we deepen our relationship on a government-to-government basis, it's critically important that it not just stay up here, but that it go all the way down. I want more Americans to know all of the work that Japanese are doing around the world, and I want to have the conversation with all of you about what more we could do together.

I made it clear when I went on this first trip that as important as my meetings were with government officials, that getting out and talking with citizens, and particularly young people like yourselves, was equally important. So we're going to look for creative ways. And any of you who have ideas, I hope you will let us know because we think there are a lot of projects and, you know, good ideas that can come from beyond government calls, and we would welcome that from you.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Secretary of State. My name is Daniel Yuan Yu. I'm a senior at the University of Tokyo, Faculty of Economics. You mentioned one of the first major problems is to combat the financial crisis. And what do you think – United States – has the U.S. considered Japan and their role basically in solving this financial crisis? And also my second question is – are there any things that you would like to ask the Japanese students? Thank you very much.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Good question. Thank you. I know how serious this financial crisis is for Japan. Much of Japan's growth over the last several decades has been export-driven. And you have a higher percentage of your economy and your workforce in manufacturing. And so as the economy drops and people in my country and elsewhere cannot afford to buy new cars or new energy-efficient appliances, or electronics, you are going to see the impact here in your country.

I believe that, because Japan is the second largest economy, the Japanese Government is looking for ways to try to stimulate internal demand and diversify your economy. I am not in a position to give you advice about how to do that. That is a decision that the government and people of Japan must make.

But again, think creatively. One of your government officials told me earlier today that an opportunity for Japan lies in the aging population. I mean, this is a good news story, that we are living longer. But we need to live longer in a healthy way. We need to live longer in an involved way. And this government official said, "You know, there are so many services that could generate economic activity in being provided to those who are aging in Japan." And it would be a source of jobs, and it would provide a service, and it would stimulate demand, all at the same time.

I discussed this with the Empress, who I am very personally admiring of, and very fond of. And we were laughing about how we first met 15 years ago, and how we each have gotten a little older, but how this is a problem society has to address.

It is also an economic opportunity. How will we do it?

Japan, once again, can lead the way. You know, I've read about some of the robots that maybe are being developed right here at this university to help elderly people living alone. I mean, that's a growth industry, because people want to stay in their own homes. And if they can be taken care of with either human help or robotic help, that's a positive. And it's also a job creator.

So, I would hope that as the Japanese Government and the Japanese people think through how to ride out this economic crisis, that there's a lot of new thinking. We are trying to do that in the United States. We are behind you when it comes to clean energy.

So, in the stimulus package, President Obama asks that we spend a lot of money to try to do more on energy efficiency, and on cleaner energy cars and longer gas mileage, and all of the other things that you have been ahead of us on. So that will mean that you, then, have to get ahead of us on something else.

But that will be good for both of us, because, given our alliance, you know, for Japan to be pushing on what you already do, and trying new things you haven't, and for us to be pushing to catch up and compete with you, that creates economic activity and growth and prosperity, and incomes rising again.

So, this is a difficult time right now. There's no argument about that. But let's seize it as an opportunity, as well.

And, you know, I – that was one of your two questions, but I should probably take the last question from over here, if that's all right. Okay? Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you for coming, and very impressive speech. My name is Hiromi Sakamoto, senior in the Faculty of Law.

I am also interested in gender equality or children's rights. And from this spring, I will work for a consulting company, and I want to be trained, myself. So would you give me some advice to work for children's future or gender equality?

SECRETARY CLINTON: I don't think you have to make a choice between contributing to the children's future or gender equality, because a woman should be able to be involved with the lives of children -- her own, if she so chooses, or other children -- and to do so in a way that demonstrates gender equality.

I think a lot of young women believe that it's an either/or choice. Now, it does require supportive families, so that you can be committed to children and leading a life of independence and equality in the workplace. But society has to do more to enable women to make that choice, because if we don't enlist the best minds that we have in today's world, we will not be as successful as we need to be.

And there are still a lot of barriers to women being at home, caring for children, and in the workplace. I think it should be a personal choice. I have friends who have been full-time mothers and are very happy, and I have friends who have been full-time in the workplace without children and are happy. But for most women in the United States today, you will do both. You will have children and you will balance your family responsibilities with your work responsibilities.

And society has to help that work better than it does, because what happens today is that most women are on, like, a balance beam, trying to be true to their responsibilities at home and in the workplace.

So, I would hope that part of what you would think of doing is working to change some of the ways that society and governments and businesses look at women in the workplace, because women should be judged on the work they do. And there is room for more women in any society to be actively involved in the world of work, without giving up on having children.

Now, I have written and said that being a mother was the most important thing I ever did. And I am very proud and grateful that I have been. But I also feel very fortunate that I could work over many years while raising my daughter, with the help of my husband, who understood the importance of that, so that I could have the opportunity to stand before you today as the Secretary of State of my country.

So, I hope that that will be possible for the young women here, and I hope that the young men will contribute to making it possible, so that Japan has the full benefit of the extraordinary intelligence that is represented in this room and at this university.

Thank you all very much.

(Applause.)

(end transcript)

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Text: Press Conference by Assistant Secretary Fried in Geneva
(Assistant secretary says it's a step forward for peace in South Caucasus) (2647)

(begin text)

U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Geneva
Press Conference
Daniel Fried
Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs
Palais des Nations
Geneva, Switzerland
February 18, 2009

Assistant Secretary Fried: Good afternoon. Thank you for staying for I think now the third in a row press appearance.

The Georgia talks here at Geneva have experienced an intensive day of work, day and a half of work. We had a significant success, agreement on proposals for joint incident prevention and response mechanisms. That is a significant step forward. It's positive, it's practical. Agreement on this document was achieved despite the fundamental differences between the parties on the ground about status, but in spite of this we have recorded an achievement.

Now a word of caution about the mechanisms. They are not self-executing documents. Putting them into effect will depend on good will on all sides and we'll have to see whether the good will that existed today in sufficient quantity to reach this achievement continues, particularly on the ground. So I have to inject a note of caution, but nevertheless, to have come this far is a positive step. It's a step forward and I welcome it.

The second working group on IDPs and humanitarian issues unfortunately did not reach an agreement on a document that proposed opening up access for humanitarian aid into South Ossetia from both the north and the south. I regret this. It is too bad, frankly, that the second working group could not reach agreement on humanitarian assistance. This was due to one party at the talks blocking consensus. As I said, I find this regrettable.

Security Council Resolution 1866 calls for free humanitarian access, and I don't think that today's result in the second working group meets the standard set for us by the Security Council Resolution.

On the other hand, and I don't want to be completely negative about work in the second working group. There have been some achievements in this group since we last met. Gas is now flowing in the pipeline north from the rest of Georgia into South Ossetia. This is good. The parties have agreed to work on water issues coming from South Ossetia down south into the rest of Georgia. This is good. There's been some

work done in providing more shelters for some of the IDPs in Abkhazia in the Gali District, and that is good.

So it was, I wouldn't say a triumphant day for peace in the South Caucasus, but it was a day with a step forward, and considering that six months ago we were dealing with a war, I'll take the good news where I can.

Now we have a very long way to go in restoring security and peace on a long term sustainable basis in Georgia. The situation along the administrative lines, particularly between South Ossetia and the rest of Georgia is unsatisfactory, even dire, with attacks, raids, violence. This is a serious problem and we saw last summer that violence can quickly get out of control.

The situation in South Ossetia proper has been well and tragically documented by groups like Human Rights Watch and OSCE reports. There are reliable reports of massive depopulation of the once rather large town of Akhagori, from 7,000 to only a couple of hundred residents. We have reliable reports of a tense situation in the Gali District in Abkhazia. Reports of local gangs putting pressure on local people. Eleven Georgian policemen have been killed, some of them with high caliber sniper rifles. In short, the situation there cannot be left on autopilot and things in Georgia, if neglected, tend to get worse.

It was therefore heartening that in the first working group agreement was reached on the subject for the next round of Geneva talks. There was agreement in the group that security, generally understood, including the principles of non use of force, principles accepted by all sides, and questions of how to improve security, how to establish new security mechanisms, will be discussed. That's good news. I regret that we were unable to come to terms on a date for the next round of Geneva, but we have agreed that this important issue, a critical issue, will be the next one tackled. The issue of non use of force and the issue of security has to be dealt with broadly. There are issues of the militias crossing over from South Ossetia into the rest of Georgia. There are concerns which the European Union and my government have expressed about Russian military forces in Gudauta and Ochamchire.

The Russian government has expressed concerns about what it calls buildup of Georgian military forces. In this context I should refer to the agreement between the Georgian Ministry of Defense and the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia providing for transparency of and limits on all Georgian military deployments in the region near Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This is a constructive agreement. As far as I know it's being honored. And the head of the EU Monitoring Mission, Ambassador Haber, was clear that he is satisfied with it.

But that said, there are concerns on all sides about security and all of these concerns on all sides have to be addressed. So I look forward to the next round at Geneva. The Geneva process has functioned more slowly than some would like but it has not tread water or gone in circles. If the will is there on all sides there is the basis to work ahead.

Now I will add something about the context of Geneva in U.S.-Russian relations. As you know, President Obama and the weekend before last Vice President Biden referred to our desire in the United States to press the reset button on U.S.-Russian relations which is a metaphoric way of saying we're going to try to deal with the areas of overlapping interest constructively, particularly in arms control and START, and also deal with the tough issues like Georgia where we do disagree in a practical and constructive manner. That's certainly the intention of the U.S. administration. I will be able to report to my leadership that we had a step forward today, and there is the basis for further practical work, even on these tough issues.

So with all of the cautionary notes, all of the problems, all of the regrets that I have that we don't have a date for the next round and that the second working group didn't achieve what it could have, nevertheless we've taken a step forward and we have the basis to keep moving in the right direction.

With that, I'd be happy to take some questions.

Question: Since there is no fixed date for a next meeting, do you think that the next opportunity that Russian and U.S. diplomats will have to speak about the issue of Georgia will be when Secretary of State Clinton comes to Geneva and meets with Mr. Lavarov in two weeks time? Will that be a topic then?

Assistant Secretary Fried: I can never predict what ministers will talk about, and it's dangerous to make such predictions because they're not ministers for nothing.

Seriously though, we have discussed, obviously the ministers may well discuss Georgia, but in the mean time my counterpart and I, Deputy Minister Grigoriy Karasin, have had regular and productive straightforward contacts. We don't hesitate to pick up the phone whenever we need to and discuss things. So we don't have to wait two weeks. If something went wrong or something went right, we would be, I think it's a fair prediction that we would be on the phone with each other pretty quickly. In addition, Ambassador Beyrle in Moscow has discussed Georgian issues with the Russian Foreign Ministry and others on a pretty regular basis. So this does come up.

We don't lack for channels. I think with the new American administration there will be ample opportunities.

Question: A follow-up to Frank's question. Would you say when the Secretary of State meets her counterpart, nuclear disarmament would be the main issue? And can you confirm the date it would be the 6th after the NATO meeting in Brussels that you will be coming here?

Assistant Secretary Fried: I don't believe, unless it's happened in the past 48 hours since I've left Washington, I don't believe there's been a formal announcement, so I won't make one here. But I am aware, let us say, of the rumors. Some rumors have more basis than others.

With respect to the topics, it's not at all a secret that the Obama administration intends to work on a follow-on to the START agreement. We've had discussions with

our Russian colleagues about this. We think there is the basis to do so. There's certainly the will on both sides to do so.

For those of you who followed U.S.-Russian relations, you may recall the Sochi Document signed by then Presidents Putin and Bush last year. That remains a valid agenda for progress and arms control and START have certainly been confirmed by this American administration as a priority area. So I think it's fair to say this will come up among other issues.

Question: Could you just elaborate a little bit on what has prevented agreement on the date for the next meeting?

Assistant Secretary Fried: We had a discussion of how quickly we could do this. There was some sentiment that we should hold the next Geneva round within the next two months. Others thought we had a lot of work to do outside of Geneva to advance the decisions we've made today, particularly about the conflict prevention and incident management mechanisms. So there was not agreement reached, and I hope that there will be in the next future.

The Geneva process is useful, and of course it was endorsed by the Security Council in Resolution 1866. That resolution encouraged the participants to reach practical results. I think we've met that standard today because we do have a practical result. But given the backing of the Security Council I think we should move ahead promptly with this discussion of security and the non-use of force. I don't see what we're waiting for.

Question: If I can just get back to the humanitarian issue for a second and the direct connection between what was reached today and the possibility of moving ahead on the humanitarian front.

How does the partial agreement reached today, the elements of communication between the sides, how do you see that contributing down the line to the humanitarian aspect? Particularly regarding the refugees? And do you see a protracted refugee situation occurring because of the disagreements between the sides?

Assistant Secretary Fried: The disagreement in the second working group was about the provision of humanitarian assistance, including from the south. Hopefully progress on the mechanisms will produce a feeling of greater security which will in turn help the South Ossetian authorities to be more comfortable allowing humanitarian assistance to arrive. I don't understand why they would be unwilling to allow it to arrive. The Security Council resolution calls for the sides to refrain from placing any impediment to humanitarian assistance. So I regret that we were unable to find a way forward, but we have to take this a step at a time, and perhaps the progress we made today in the first working group will unblock the second working group. But we have a lot of work to do, it's clear.

Question: And the refugee situation, it's becoming a protracted situation?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, I wish I could tell you that I was confident it wouldn't be, but the situation in South Ossetia, especially causes great concern. There are a limited number of UN monitors in Abkhazia. There are no regular monitors whatsoever going into South Ossetia. There have been visits of the OSCE, but no regular monitoring. The situation there is somewhere between difficult and dire. I do not believe that the conditions exist in the real world on the ground in South Ossetia for the refugees from the recent war to feel secure in going back to their homes, and this is a dreadful situation.

I wish I could say that the situation will improve. I hope it will improve, but it is not a good situation and we need to work on both security and humanitarian issues so the situation doesn't linger. Things in that part of the world, if they are neglected, tend to get much worse. We've seen what happens when they do get worse.

So all of the parties have a responsibility to move ahead as fast as possible to improve the situation on the ground.

Question: On the evidence from the four sessions of talks here and obviously all the evidence you have at your disposal from your embassies in Moscow and Georgia, the stumbling block seems to me to be the Russian refusal to contemplate withdrawing its forces. Do you see any prospect of them changing their mind?

Assistant Secretary Fried: There are two aspects, well several aspects of Russian forces in Georgia. There are of course, the provisions of the ceasefire of August 12th negotiated by President Sarkozy of France. It is our belief that those provisions have not yet been met in full and that Russian forces are in places beyond their positions of August 7th before the war. It is our view, the view of the American government, that the Russian forces should withdraw to the positions held on August 7th.

There is also the problem of the buildup of Russian forces, both air forces at the Gudauta base and the talk about some sort of small naval base or facility in Ochamchire. I do not expect that the Russian forces will fully vacate Georgia, that is South Ossetia and Abkhazia, for a long time. They've said as much. So we and the Russians have a fundamental disagreement. That disagreement need not prevent our working together in other areas, and one of the bases that we have approached these talks on is an understanding that we can disagree fundamentally with Russia about the causes of the war, about their recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and nevertheless work together to stabilize the situation, prevent the use of force, and improve the situation on the ground so that refugees can return. Despite the disagreements.

Now that requires both a lot of work, a lot of creativity, because we could easily fall into a shouting match each time we discuss Georgia, but that doesn't get us anywhere. So although I can register these disagreements, I'm also emphasizing that there is an area of overlapping or potentially overlapping U.S.-Russian interests upon which we can build.

I should say that the Georgian delegation made similar points. They said we have very deep disagreements, but we're not here to dwell on them, we're here to make progress. And I think all sides, and I include the Russian delegation also, approach

these talks in that spirit sufficiently that we made some substantial progress yesterday and today.

Question: Just a quick follow-up. During the course of these two days have you had a bilateral meeting with your counterpart, Mr. Karasin, to specifically discuss what the U.S. and Russia can do to build up its relations with the new administration naturally in place?

Assistant Secretary Fried: We did not have a formal bilateral agreement, but we talked quite a bit on the margins. We discussed both how we can work together and discussed the possibility of future work together. We've enjoyed a good working relationship and a productive one and I expect this will continue.

Thank you very much.

(end text)

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Chronicles of a Startup

(Triumphs and tribulations of an unusual business venture) (1386)

David Adewumi is founder and chief storyteller of heekya.com (<http://www.heekya.com/>), a startup technology company dubbed the "Wikipedia of stories." He contributes to VentureBeat, a magazine on digital media. Previously, he developed products for Lomic Inc., an energy-related software firm, and worked for the U.S. Army. His alma mater is Pennsylvania State University.

February 19

Are we really heading toward an economic depression?

For startups, where every month can be one of survival, the thought of an economic depression can be quite ... depressing. The perfect storm of events may force (in some cases, already has) hard-working startups that otherwise have successful technologies, teams and markets into what blogger Techcrunch calls "the deadpool," or the place startups go when they die.

The race for startups isn't to gain 10 million users, but rather to get positive cash-flow and become profitable shortly thereafter.

While during the boom years of the post-2003 era companies regularly would raise mountains of cash for questionable products and applications, now the focus for technology entrepreneurs is on how to "monetize" their web and software applications. They try to do it either by selling directly to consumers or by turning toward revenue models, such as software-as-a-service agreements (known in

industry lingo as SaaS), whereby monthly fees are charged for license/use of software.

Heekya faces the same struggles many other companies, individuals and organizations around the world face at this time. Yet our biggest cost is people, and our advantage is in a company and product that play well with “the double bottom line.”

The double bottom line, a term I first heard used by Ted Leonsis, a successful entrepreneur and sports-team owner, refers to a company that does well by doing good, that generates profit by creating socially minded products that increase the standard of living or happiness of users or by providing another “public” value.

Heekya — by adhering to the double bottom line — attracts talented developers who are more interested in seeing our product succeed than in pulling in bigger paychecks.

January 28

There's a word every entrepreneur loves to loathe or loathes to love: diligence.

It could be described as conscientiousness in paying attention to a task. Business or due diligence is the process by which an investor, or potential partner, will painstakingly review every fiber of your business, looking for signs of irregularities, misplaced paperwork or incompetence. Major miscues may signal that your company is not fit to be invested in or partnered with.

Heekya is currently going through a diligence process. We are pleased to work with a top legal firm, which has helped guide us through every step of the way, as much as we are confident in our tediously collected but not trivial records — the certificate of incorporation, company bylaws, documents related to previously invested capital, and a capitalization table that shows ownership breakdown.

We also have done a great job preparing financial and head-count projections, so it is not difficult to procure all the relevant paperwork.

A potential investor or partner also might be interested in seeing your business plan, team biographies and résumés, as well as a strategic roadmap for the years ahead. We've taken care of all of those.

Execution is a key to success, and a key to execution is attention to detail and focus.

There's nary a place we see more need for this than in diligence.

January 14

As [New York Times columnist] Thomas Friedman writes in his book *The World Is Flat*, what happens in Bangalore affects us here in the United States and what happens in the technology corridors of the United States affects others around the world. We are all affected by the recent economic travails.

Heekya too has been affected, both in its ability to raise capital and in its discussions with potential partners. Angel investors, who were great prospects for new ventures just several months ago, have seen in some cases a 40 percent decline in their net worth. Angels' ability to invest in young startups like Heekya is hampered.

Partners interested in Heekya technology now must walk each potential deal through even more scrutiny as big and small companies alike seek to tighten loose screws on their ships and conserve cash.

But the beauty of building a technology company with great people, even in a tough economic environment (or perhaps I should say: especially in such an environment) is that we still hold onto our strongest assets — our loyal employees. (Considering that we use free open-source tools and platforms, they are our greatest expense.) As we move forward in the new year and look to add to our stable of great story tellers and technical minds, we look ahead with joy, not fear. Despite challenges, we still attract and retain great people. So Heekya is in position to reach its dream of allowing anybody, anywhere to share his or her story.

January 8

There's been a debate throughout recent history about whether certain human traits are inborn or can be developed through teaching and social interactions.

With the advent of modern business, that discourse has extended to entrepreneurship.

Are people born entrepreneurs or are they taught to be such creatures?

A friend sent me email today saying, "I am becoming convinced that entrepreneurs are born and cannot be made. Not good if you teach entrepreneurship."

I'm not sure I wholly agree. I think combined forces of nature and culture make an entrepreneur.

Is the habit of doing things that failures [people who tend to fail at things they do] avoid doing innate, or can it be developed?

Habits, of course, can be formed, and I believe the same is true with entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is more of a habit and a way of thinking than an actual characteristic that one is born with.

So even if some are born with a greater propensity to habitually take action, it doesn't mean that others cannot acquire such entrepreneurial traits.

And if we can change, isn't everything possible?

December 17

A reader complained that there isn't much on the Heekya (<http://heekya.com>) Web site. That's true.

Our product is not fully developed yet. That's why we call ourselves a startup. What we at Heekya want to do is fix storytelling online, which is broken. Heekya wants to be the "Wikipedia of stories," a social storytelling platform that changes the way consumers create, discover and share stories. Free. Fun. Easy. 60 seconds.

You can preview our product at <http://heekya.com/preview.php> . What you see is what you get: drag and drop story editor; import all media (photo, video, text and audio) from third-party online social services. Users can grab and embed the heekya story widget across social networks (Facebook, MySpace, et. al.,) blogs (WordPress, Blogger, Twitter) personal Web sites and via e-mail and instant message.

We bet that the ability to re-mix and mash up themes, motifs, plots and similar stuff from other sources will allow users to create new stories or retell the existing ones from their own vantage point. Sharing and re-sharing stories will keep user engagement levels high, we hope, and attract more traffic.

That's our story. What's yours?

December 2

The best advice anyone will give you isn't on what company to build, how to build it, whom first to hire, where to locate or how much money to secure before a launch. Rather, the best advice is about how to prepare for the long mental and physical journey ahead when you are about to start a new business.

If we get too high on our highs, then we will want to give up on the dark days — days during which we need to keep in mind that success is around the corner.

This is central to the vision I have for Heekya, my startup. My colleagues and I have to focus on executing our plans and ignoring the obstacles we face, day after day. By reminding ourselves why we started Heekya (because everyone has a story to tell) and by believing steadfastly in how our company can change the community or even the country (by unlocking the power of stories for the whole world), we have persevered on days when failure has seemed but a sneeze away.

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