



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

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Rice Remarks on Release of 2007 Report on Human Rights Practices

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice
On The State Department's 2007 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

March 11, 2008
Washington, D.C.

SECRETARY RICE:
Good afternoon. I am pleased today to join Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor – Jonathan Farrar – in announcing the publication of the Country Report on Human Rights



Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Practices for 2007.

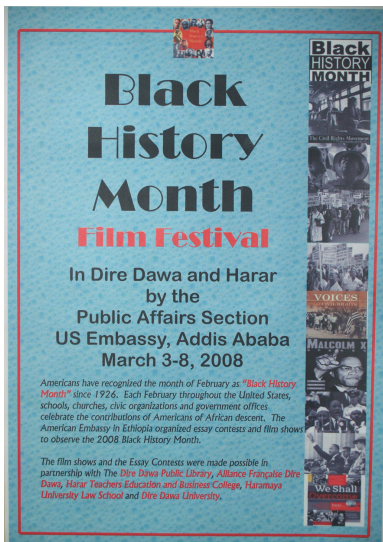
In every region of the world, men and women are working peacefully, and often at great risk to themselves and their families, to secure human rights and fundamental freedoms, to follow their consciences and speak their minds without fear, to choose those who would govern them and to hold their leaders accountable and to achieve equal justice

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Black History Month Celebration in Harar and Dire Dawa

The Information Resource Center at the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy observed Black History Month in part by holding essay contests and film shows in Dire Dawa and Harar towns from March 3-8, 2008.

The Embassy's Public Affairs Section invited grade 9-12 students from twelve high schools in Dire Dawa and Harar



to participate in this year's essay contest, hosted in coordination with the Rosa Parks American Corner Library at the Dire Dawa Public Library and the Lincoln American Corner Library at the Harar Teachers Education and Business College. Students wrote on the theme, "An African-American I Admire." Prizes were handed out

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to the top four winners in both towns. In Dire Dawa, PAS presented two additional two honor prizes.

In addition to awarding prizes to the essay contest winners, the Embassy and American Corners hosted

four film screenings from the Eyes on the Prize series on the American Civil Rights Movement for high school students and teachers, and for students from the Law Faculty of Haramaya University and Dire Dawa University. A separate film show on "The Muslim Americans" from the America at a Crossroads series was also shown in Dire

Dawa. Over one thousand audience members watched film shows in both towns and the program was well received. The film shows were made possible by the positive cooperation of our American Corner library partners, the Alliance Française Dire Dawa, Dire Dawa University and the Law Faculty of Haramaya University. ♦



Partial view of the audience watching the American Civil Rights Movement Years film at Harar Teachers Training and Business College



Award Prize recipients with their school headmasters, officials and Embassy representatives in Harar.



Information Officer Darragh Paradiso (far left) and Ato Mesrak Worku, Information and Public Relations Bureau Head of Dire Dawa (far right) with the six students who won the contest.



Partial view of the audience watching "The Muslim Americans" film in Dire Dawa.

U.S. Air War College Students Visit Ethiopia

Addis Ababa (U.S. Embassy) Thursday, 06 March 2008 -- 14 students of the U.S. Air War College concluded a four-day visit, March 2-6, to Addis Ababa and Debre Zeit, Ethiopia. The students, who are lieutenant colonels and colonels completing a one-year course of professional military education at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, visited Ethiopia as part of a familiarization trip through several African countries. The impressions and facts gathered throughout their journey will assist in the completion of their studies, since many of them are doing research on African political, economic, and military subjects.

While in Ethiopia, the group visited the African Union and the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea and received briefings on the



Ambassador Yamamoto (center) posing for photo with the students of the U.S. Air War College at the U.S. Embassy

mission of the United States Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa based in Djibouti. Aside from their official meetings, the fourteen officers visited an Ethiopian coffee

factory in Addis Ababa, and enjoyed local culture and food at one of the excellent national restaurants. ♦

Rice Remarks on Release of 2007 Report on Human Rights Practices . . .

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under the law.

These aspirations, though common to all of us, are unfortunately still denied to millions worldwide, often by their own governments. In too many countries, champions of human rights are denounced and persecuted, vilified as traitors or targeted for repression -- just for insisting upon the freedoms enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In other countries, even in those that have recently begun transitions to democracy, human rights are not fully secured, perhaps because of weak institutions or corruption, which undermine the rule of law, perhaps because of conflict or insecurity, which intrude upon the lib-

erty of individuals, or perhaps because of crushing poverty and disease, which can cause even the most stalwart citizens to lose hope that their lives will improve.

A nation's path to a future of human rights protected by law is neither smooth nor straight. Along the way, there are bound to be stumbles and setbacks. Even under the best of circumstances, it is not easy to transform democratic ideals into effective democratic institutions. Yet despite every challenge, the courageous champions of human rights persevere. They are an inspiration to their fellow citizens and to all of us. The high standard that they set continues to give hope to people everywhere who work peacefully for their liberty, their dignity, and their rights.

We gather today to support them and it is our hope that this Human Rights Report will highlight the obstacles that still stand in their way, so that they may bear the mantle of justice at least -- at less risk to themselves and to their families. This document is collected and written with the optimism that no corner of the earth is permanently condemned to tyranny. As President Bush has said, "Freedom can be resisted, and freedom can be delayed, but freedom cannot be denied." In the long run, we are confident that citizens who sacrifice for their dignity and their rights will prevail, just as the Havels and the Mandelas did before them.

Change may, indeed change will, take time, but change will come. As long as citizens around the world

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Education Unlikely to Be Predominant Campaign Issue

By Michelle Austein
Staff Writer

Washington -- In the past five elections, education was one of the major issues discussed on the campaign trail, but this is not the case in 2008.

The biggest issues in American politics are "peace and prosperity," explained William Galston, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington. "When one of them is on the table in a particular [election] year, that is the dominant issue."

"When both are on the table simultaneously, that ... is the election," Galston said at a forum about educational issues and presidential politics hosted by the American Enterprise Institute March 3. "That is what the debate is going to be about."

In an election season dominated by discussions on Iraq and the economy, education so far has gotten little attention from the presidential candidates. Health care, climate change and other issues also are cited often as more important to voters than education.

Chester Finn, president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, an organization that promotes and evaluates education issues, said there are a number of reasons why education might not be a dominant issue in 2008. For instance, "people may be wary and frustrated ... with how much talk there has been about educational reform in previous elections."

Some voters may feel that "there really isn't all that much a president can do about America's schools,"

Finn explained. "He or she does not have much actual leverage over what is taught and what is learned and who teaches what to whom."

Additionally, many Americans believe that educational standards have improved in the past few decades and therefore are less concerned about educational reform.

"Parents today view materials that their kids are using in school as significantly harder than the materials they used and their kids' education as significantly better than theirs," said Galston.

Americans are more concerned with school discipline, Galston said. He cited a recent Public Agenda survey that found that 73 percent of those asked said school discipline was more important than improving educational standards. Public Agenda is a New York-based nonprofit research organization that does opinion surveys on a range of issues.

THE CANDIDATES' VIEWS

In the coming months, the candidates might discuss educational policy a bit more and try to define their positions on the topic. However, if "today's candidates thought education was a winning issue or an important issue in the '08 election ... we'd know it by now," Finn said.

Education might not be the dominant issue, but the candidates will address the topic in speeches and on their Web sites.

Presumed Republican nominee John McCain indicated in a speech March 4 that he will be discussing education during his general election cam-

paign.

"We will campaign in favor of ... educating our children to prepare them for the new economic realities by giving parents choices about their children's education that they do not have now," McCain said.

McCain has favored allowing students to attend public schools outside their home district if their parents feel they are not receiving an appropriate education. Democrats Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama have so far not advocated such a view.

McCain generally has supported President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, while Clinton and Obama have been more skeptical of its success, citing concerns over lack of funding for its initiatives.

No Child Left Behind, signed in 2002, calls for improving American educational standards by holding schools accountable for how well their students perform. Its effectiveness continues to be debated.

On the campaign trail, Clinton and Obama have discussed ways to improve education by recruiting more teachers.

For more on where the candidates stand on education and other key election issues, see U.S. Elections: Candidates on the Issues (<http://uspolitics.america.gov/uspolitics/elections/issues.html>).

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

Bush Requests Nearly \$7 Billion To Strengthen U.S. Diplomacy

By David I. McKeeby
Staff Writer

Washington -- President Bush is asking Congress for nearly \$7 billion in extra funding to pay for diplomatic initiatives aimed at giving U.S. allies in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Western Hemisphere the tools they need to promote peace and stability, build strong governments, deliver essential services to their citizens and promote long-term prosperity.

"We have to be stronger, more creative and more determined than the enemies of peace," Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte says.

The \$6.897 billion requested by the White House is in addition to the State Department's \$35 billion request for 2008, and is one component of a larger \$196.5 billion emergency supplemental funding package aimed primarily toward ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In a March 6 House Appropriations Committee hearing, Negroponte said the international affairs funding, if approved, would help further a host of U.S. priorities in addition to stabilizing Iraq and Afghanistan. These include providing support for international peacekeepers in Sudan's Darfur region, building on international diplomatic progress on the Korean Peninsula, helping Mexico confront drug traffickers and supporting Israelis and Palestinians as they work for peace.

In Iraq, he said, a surge in coalition forces during 2007 improved security conditions and created new opportunities to help the Iraqi people. With \$679 million, the United



Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington, Thursday, March 6, 2008, before a House Appropriations subcommittee hearing (AP Photo/Dennis Cook)

States could field an additional 27 Provincial Reconstruction Teams as well as embassy operations to support the Iraqi government. An additional \$956 million in foreign aid could help spur development and promote new business opportunities.

For Afghanistan, the president is seeking \$839 million to "reconnect the people to their government" with new roads and infrastructure, training a new generation of leaders, and promoting new economic opportunities as an alternative to extremism. Similar measures are needed across the border in Pakistan, he added, requesting \$60 million to help the Pakistani government improve conditions in its Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

The United Nations missions in both Iraq and Afghanistan complement U.S. efforts to confront terrorism and create new government and security institutions, as well as promote human rights and the rule of law, justifying a \$53 million contribution requested by the Bush administration, he said.

The United Nations is also playing a key role in addressing the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Sudan's Darfur region, Negroponte said, and the White House is asking Congress to provide a \$723.6 million contribution for these operations as part of the regular budget. An additional \$70 million from this supplemental request could improve conditions in Darfur by supporting Sudan's upcoming elections, which could strengthen the fragile comprehensive peace agreement between North and South.

In February 2007, the Six-Party Talks achieved a breakthrough when North Korea agreed to start dismantling its nuclear program in exchange for energy assistance and other aid. Negroponte said \$54 million of the request will further progress by purchasing and shipping heavy fuel oil.

Closer to home, Negroponte said, Mexico faces the challenge of drug cartels and organized crime responsible for smuggling 90 percent of the cocaine that reaches America's streets. President Felipe Calderón has asked for U.S. help, and the White House seeks \$550 million from Congress, to be followed by an additional \$550 million next year in support of its southern neighbor. This funding is part of the Merida Initiative, which helps fight organ-

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Immigrants Fuel Small Business Growth in the United States

By Elizabeth Kelleher
Staff Writer

Washington -- Immigrants are one of the fastest-growing segments of small business owners in the United States and will be a sizeable portion of owners by 2017, according to Intuit Inc.'s Future of Small Business Report, co-authored by the Institute for the Future.

Men and women among the 36 million immigrants in the United States have higher rates of starting new businesses than do native-born Americans, says Robert Fairlie, an economist who produces the Kauffman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity. The index shows that immigrant women are starting businesses at a rate 41 percent higher than native-born women. And immigrant men start businesses at a rate 25 percent higher than native-born men.

Peter Liu, the founder of San Francisco's New Resource Bank in San Francisco, is a native of Taiwan. After earning degrees at University of California, Berkeley, Liu says he looked for a job with the "biggest company that would pay the most." But after he landed such a job, designing petrochemical plants around the world, he became disillusioned. He noticed that the best and cleanest technology was not always used.

In 2006, Liu opened New Resource, which seeks to support green design "through the economy." Today, the bank has more than \$130 million in assets and has attracted business customers interested in sustainable energy from around the globe (and even a \$10 million deposit from the state of California).

Immigrant women are:

41%

...more likely to start a business than native-born women.

According to Institute for the Future's Steven King, because immigrants can easily navigate "soft trade-barriers" -- culture, language, unusual rules or ways of doing things overseas -- they increase trade and foreign investment in the United States.

Immigrants start businesses for a variety of reasons, often to avoid barriers that come with traditional jobs or because their skills do not translate well into corporate America. Because small businesses employ slightly more than half of all U.S. private-sector workers, these immigrants are staking their place in the economy as job creators.

Asa Kalavade, raised in India, co-founded Tata Systems Inc., a Massachusetts-based technology business that employs 65 people. Kalavade said in India she felt societal pressure to study something more "woman-friendly" than engineering. After earning a graduate engineering degree at University of California, Berkeley, she stayed in the United States to work at Bell Labs Research before setting off on her own.

Starting her own business was not easy. Kalavade estimates that from 1999 through 2001 some 40 venture capitalists turned her down when asked if they would exchange startup money for equity in the company.

She and her co-founder, a woman from China, did not give up, and, eventually, investors helped them start Tata. Fairlie would say Kalavade is daring by nature. "To leave your own country and come at great cost to another country, that's self-selecting" for entrepreneurial spirit, he said.

Immigrants are "prone to taking risks," said Farhana Huq, of CEO Women, a San Francisco nonprofit that helps low-income immigrant women start businesses. "They really just put themselves on the line."

Immigrant men are:

25%

...more likely to start a business than native-born men.

According to the Institute for the Future's Steven King, "mompreneurs," entrepreneurs who are also mothers, get work-life balance by being their own bosses. And immigrant women are no exception.

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Children with Facial Deformities Aided by Volunteer Group

Washington -- Volunteers from across the world provided free medical care to children with facial deformities in November 2007 during the Operation Smile World Journey of Smiles project, the largest simultaneous international medical mission of its kind.

More than 1,700 volunteers from 44 countries, including more than 700 Americans, provided free surgical treatment to 4,000 children born with cleft lips and cleft palates. The volunteers also conducted free physical examinations of more than 7,400 patients.

The goal was to increase the number of children served annually through establishment of regional care centers.

Operation Smile is a Virginia-based charity dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults born with facial deformities.

Volunteers, medical personnel, counselors and even celebrities worked in 40 hospitals, care centers and clinics in 25 countries in Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America.

In the Philippines, where Operation Smile began 25 years ago, program founders Bill and Kathy McGee signed an agreement with the mayor of Makati -- part of Manila -- to establish a care center at a city hospital. Additional centers are planned for Cebu City and Davao City.

Another Operation Smile mission in Amman, Jordan, treated Jorda-



Medical Team pose for photo with Ethiopian children who were screened for treatment.. 238 Ethiopians benefit from Operation Smile, a worldwide children's medical charity mission in Ethiopia in November 2007. Out of the total beneficiaries, 111 were treated at the Black Lion Hospital in Addis while 127 underwent surgery at the Jimma University Specialized Hospital in Jimma.

nian, Iraqi and Palestinian children.

Carmit Bachar of the pop music group Pussycat Dolls participated in the medical mission in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Bachar and her team used face and body painting, book-making, crafts and music to help young patients feel comfortable before their screenings and surgeries.

Actors Roselyn Sanchez of the American television program Without a Trace and Eric Winter of the American program Brothers and Sisters helped to screen nearly 250 children in Managua, Nicaragua, and also helped ease the pre-surgery anxieties of patients and their families.

"To see all of those children and their families with their faces filled

with hope for a better future was incredible," Sanchez said. Nurse volunteer Quinn Sharkey recalled one patient she met in Managua. "The boy was terrified and at first was very

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champion the universal values of human rights, there is hope. And we, in the United States, continue to believe that it is our duty to support these courageous men and women. And it is in that spirit that I am pleased to present these Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007.

And now I'll turn the podium to Jonathan Farrar. ♦

Children with Facial Deformities Aided by Volunteer Group . . .

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agitated, but the anesthesiologist and myself calmed him down and eventually got him to lie down. He grabbed my hand and I held his hand and reassured him in what must have been the most horrible Spanish he had ever heard. He looked at me and smiled. ... It showed me that caring for another person crosses all language and cultural barriers."

Volunteer David Wolfe recounted an experience in Casablanca, Morocco. A "restaurant manager came up to me and told me that they had a young man working at the hotel who had a cleft lip. ... I thought nothing of it until three days later when I saw the boy [after the operation]. I kept wondering that if I was experiencing these random acts of kindness, how many [more] were occurring that I was not witnessing."



An Ethiopian child who was selected for the surgery in the 2007 Operation Smile project in Ethiopia

In partnership with Yale University, Operation Smile collected data and DNA samples in more than half of the participating countries. The samples will be analyzed with the

goal of identifying genetic markers of cleft lip and cleft palate.

"World Journey of Smiles was ... the first step in our next journey together as an organization to build the infrastructure that will support children in need year-round," Kathy Magee said.

Operation Smile participants include singers Jessica Simpson and Mariah Carey; television personalities Mark Burnett and Billy Bush; actor Justin Chatwin (*War of the Worlds*); Venezuelan singer Oscar D'León; actresses Roma Downey and Molly Sims; O.A.R. guitarist Benj Gershman; professional football player Dhani Jones; photographers Nigel Parry and Melanie Dunea; and businessman Donald Trump Jr. and his wife, the actress and model Vanessa Trump.

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Immigrants Fuel Small Business Growth in the United States . . .

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Fanta Nabay left Sierra Leone and came to the United States in 2000 after rebels killed her parents in front of her and her siblings. Nabay started a retail business through which she sells hand-dyed African cloth and handmade jewelry in California. When she and her husband had a baby, her focus shifted to the baby, so she started a daycare center.

Immigrants have advantages in a global marketplace, the Intuit study says; language skills and relationships from home countries help

them find suppliers and customers. America.gov contacted Kalavade in India, where she was on a business trip. When America.gov telephoned Nabay, she was on another call to Africa.

Yan Liu came to the United States in 1997 after graduating from college in China and running her father's retail business in Shandong for two years. In 2002, she opened a jewelry store (Lireille) in Oakland, California. Her father locates gemstones and jade in China for her.

"In China, each region specializes in different products. Even within a

city there are different districts specializing. You have to know those places. That's one of our advantages," Yan Liu said.

Even though only two out of 10 of all small businesses succeed in their first year, immigrants might have an advantage, according to King.

"Immigrants are more attuned -- often more than natives -- to the opportunity in America," he said. These motivating factors lead to a higher rate of success."

Yan Liu said, "I'm still starting, not successful yet, but I am happy with myself." ◆

Overview of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

(begin text)

U.S. Department of State
Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – 2007
Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
March 11, 2008

Overview and Acknowledgements

Why the Reports Are Prepared

This report is submitted to the Congress by the Department of State in compliance with Sections 116(d) and 502B(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (FAA), as amended. The law provides that the Secretary of State shall transmit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate by February 25 "a full and complete report regarding the status of internationally recognized human rights, within the meaning of subsection (A) in countries that receive assistance under this part, and (B) in all other foreign countries which are members of the United Nations and which are not otherwise the subject of a human rights report under this Act." We have also included reports on several countries that do not fall into the categories established by these statutes and that thus are not covered by the congressional requirement.

In the early 1970s the United States formalized its responsibility to speak out on behalf of international human rights standards. In 1976 Congress enacted legislation creating a Coordinator of Human Rights in the Department of State, a position later upgraded to Assistant Secretary. In 1994 the Congress created a position of Senior Advisor

for Women's Rights. Congress has also written into law formal requirements that US foreign and trade policy take into account countries' human rights and worker rights performance and that country reports be submitted to the Congress on an annual basis. The first reports, in 1977, covered only the 82 countries receiving U.S. aid; this year 196 reports are submitted.

How the Reports Are Prepared

In 1993 the Secretary of State strengthened the human rights efforts of our embassies by asking all sections to contribute information and corroborate reports of human rights violations, and there was a renewed effort to link mission programming to the advancement of human rights and democracy. In 1994 the Department of State reorganized the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, renaming it the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. This move reflected both a broader sweep and a more focused approach to the interlocking issues of human rights, worker rights and democracy. As part of that effort, the annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices represent the bureau's continuing effort to report human rights violations. The reports reflect the work by hundreds of State Department, Foreign Service, and other U.S. Government employees.

Our embassies, which prepared the initial drafts of the reports, gathered information throughout the year from a variety of sources across the political spectrum, including government officials, jurists, armed forces sources, journalists, human rights monitors, academics, and labor ac-

tivists. This information-gathering can be hazardous, and U.S. Foreign Service Officers regularly go to great lengths, under trying and sometimes dangerous conditions, to investigate reports of human rights abuse, monitor elections, and come to the aid of individuals at risk, such as political dissidents and human rights defenders whose rights are threatened by their governments.

After the embassies completed their drafts, they were sent to Washington for review by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, in cooperation with other State Department offices. As they worked to corroborate, analyze, and edit the reports, Department officers drew on their own sources of information. These included reports provided by U.S. and other human rights groups, foreign government officials, representatives from the United Nations and other international and regional organizations and institutions, experts from academia, and the media. Officers also consulted with experts on worker rights, refugee issues, military and police topics, women's issues, and legal matters. The guiding principle was to ensure that all information was assessed objectively, thoroughly, and fairly.

The reports in this volume will be used as a resource for shaping policy, conducting diplomacy, and making assistance, training, and other resource allocations. They also will serve as a basis for the U.S. Government's cooperation with private groups to promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights.

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Missile Development, Proliferation Among Top U.S. Concerns

By Merle D. Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington -- The heightened threat from advanced missile technology and the proliferation of missiles among countries of security concern to the United States are the major reasons the United States is pursuing a missile defense system, according to a senior U.S. diplomat.

"You start with the fact that there is a wide availability of ballistic missiles in the world today. Some roughly two dozen countries either have or are pursuing missile programs," says John Rood, acting under secretary of state for arms control and international security affairs.

Rood says the missiles being used today have longer ranges, are more sophisticated and there are more of them. "Many of them are in the hands of some of the countries that we are most concerned about from a security perspective, such as North Korea and Iran," Rood said March 11 at a Washington Foreign Press Center briefing.

Rood cited Iran as a recent example of the threat that faces the United States and allies in Europe. Earlier this year, the Iranian defense minister announced that Iran is seeking new missiles with greater range and capabilities, Rood stated "And we also saw the Iranians, of course, conduct a flight test of a space launch vehicle" that used technology "very similar" to that of ballistic missiles, he said.

As a consequence, Rood says the United States continues to see this threat progression causing the greatest amount of concern. The United States is not just interested in a missile defense shield for itself, he says, but also for its allies and friends.

"And we have pursued a range of cooperative efforts with allies, and we feel like we've had a very successful track record here over the past few years," he said.

Today, Japan is the United States' largest missile defense partner, Rood said. But there is also the MEADS program for joint development and deployment of a missile defense system in cooperation with Germany and Italy, he said.

Some of the other joint programs and cooperative efforts involve Israel, Britain and Denmark, he said. And negotiations are under way with Poland and the Czech Republic, where the United States wants to place 10 interceptor missiles and a large state-of-art radar facility.

Rood said negotiations with the Czech government are very close to resolution. Literally, only a few words need to be negotiated for a final agreement, he said. And he said negotiations with Poland are also very close to resolution.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk met with President Bush at the White House March 10.

"I think the question of moving forward on missile defense is increasingly one where allies agree on the

need to move forward," he said. "And we're hopeful that ... in the days and weeks ahead, that we're going to continue to see that progression and see some expression of that view at the Bucharest [NATO] Summit in April."

The ongoing debate over a missile defense shield located in Europe will be a featured issue at the NATO Summit April 2-4.

Rood said most of the discussions at NATO of late have revolved around the degree of protection afforded by a missile defense shield, how the allies will cooperate to provide that protection and what will be the different roles and responsibilities afforded to NATO members and their national efforts.

NORTH KOREA AND IRAN NEGOTIATIONS

In other ballistic missile news, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack announced that Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill will meet with North Korea's Kim Kye-Gwan in Geneva March 13 in a new push for a full declaration from Pyongyang on its nuclear programs.

Also, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov urged all nations March 11 to do everything possible to engage Iran in further negotiations over its highly contested nuclear development program.

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

Bush Condemns Terrorist Attack in Jerusalem

Washington -- The United States joins the international community in strongly condemning a terrorist attack on Jerusalem rabbinical students in an apparent bid to derail Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

"This barbaric and vicious attack on innocent civilians deserves the condemnation of every nation," President Bush says. "I have just spoken with [Israeli] Prime Minister [Ehud] Olmert to extend my deepest condolences to the victims, their families, and to the people of Israel. I told him the United States stands firmly with Israel in the face of this terrible attack."

In a separate statement issued in Washington, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said "there is no cause that could ever justify this



President George W. Bush

action."

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas quickly condemned the attack, as did leaders from Canada, France, Germany, Russia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the European Union and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

British Foreign Secretary David Mili-

band called the killings "an arrow aimed at the heart of the peace process," but Israeli officials have vowed that peace talks will continue.

On March 6, a gunman opened fire in the Mercaz Harav Yeshiva, a prominent rabbinical seminary in the heart of Jerusalem, killing eight students and wounding 35 others in the deadliest terrorist attack on Israeli

citizens in two years, according to Israeli authorities. Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization, claimed responsibility for the attack March 7, according to news reports.

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

Overview of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices . . .

(Continued from page 9)

The Country Reports on Human Rights Practices cover internationally recognized individual, civil, political and worker rights, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These rights include freedom from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, from prolonged detention without charges, from disappearance or clandestine detention, and from other flagrant violations of the right to life, liberty and the security of the person.

Universal human rights seek to incorporate respect for human dignity into the processes of government and law. All persons have the inalienable right to change their government by peaceful means and to enjoy basic freedoms, such as freedom of expression, association, assembly, movement, and religion, without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, national origin, or sex. The right to join a free trade union is a necessary condition of a free society and economy. Thus the reports assess key internationally recognized worker rights, including the right of association, the right to

organize and bargain collectively, the prohibition of forced or compulsory labor, the status of child labor practices, the minimum age for employment of children, and acceptable work conditions.

(end text)

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

Highest Recorded Rates of Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis Reported

By Cheryl Pellerin
Staff Writer

Washington -- Drug-resistant forms of the airborne infectious disease tuberculosis (TB) are spreading around the world, raising concern among health leaders and prompting a global response to these emerging and often lethal contagions.

The response includes a new World Health Organization (WHO) report, *Anti-Tuberculosis Drug Resistance in the World*, based on data collected between 2002 and 2006 on 90,000 TB patients in 81 nations.

The report -- which presents findings from the largest survey to date on the scale of drug resistance in TB -- targets multidrug-resistant (MDR) TB, which is resistant to at least two of the best (first-line) anti-TB drugs, isoniazid and rifampicin.

"What is disturbing to me and all those involved," Dr. Mario Raviglione, director of the WHO Stop TB Department, told the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health February 27, "is that we are now seeing the highest rates of MDR-TB ever recorded in the history of TB control."

MULTIDRUG RESISTANCE

Those with MDR-TB must be treated with more expensive, less effective second-line drugs for 18 to 24 months. If they do not complete this course or are treated with the wrong drugs, they can develop extensively drug-resistant (XDR) TB, an often deadly type of MDR-TB that is resistant to first- and second-line drugs.



WHO estimates that nearly 500,000 MDR-TB cases occurred worldwide in 2006, with more than 110,000 deaths. According to the study, which for the first time includes an analysis of extensively drug-resistant TB, the virtually untreatable XDR-TB has been recorded in 46 countries.

The highest rates of MDR-TB among new cases were reported from Azerbaijan (22.3 percent), Eastern Europe's Moldova (19.4 percent), Ukraine (16 percent) and Russia's Tomsk Oblast (15 percent).

The report also found a link between HIV infection and MDR-TB. Surveys in Latvia and Ukraine found nearly twice the level of MDR-TB among TB patients living with HIV than among those who were not infected with the virus.

In 2006, WHO launched the Stop

TB Strategy, the core of which is a TB-control approach called DOTS (directly observed therapy-short course), created in 1995. It includes political commitment with sustained financing, case detection through quality-assured bacteriology, standardized treatment with supervision and patient support, an effective drug supply and management system, and a monitoring and evaluation system.

More than 22 million patients have been treated under DOTS-based services and an expanded strategy recognizes key challenges of TB/HIV and MDR-TB.

URGENT ACTION

In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)/National Institutes of Health (NIH), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) support WHO TB-control efforts, and the U.S. government helped develop the WHO Global MDR-XDR TB Plan.

CDC works closely with other agencies to prevent TB globally, CDC Director Julie Gerberding told the House panel, "and [Health and Human Services/]CDC also supports WHO and the Stop TB Partnership on a number of important activities, including providing technical assistance to the Global Drug Facility, which works to supply quality medications for TB programs."

Complementary research efforts of CDC and NIH play a key role in the development of new drugs and new regimens for drug-resistant TB, she added.

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Highest Recorded Rates of Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis Reported . . .

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At USAID, Kent Hill, assistant administrator for global health, said, the core of work on TB is focused on developing the capacity of countries affected by TB to put in place effective programs to combat and control TB.

"Between 2006 and 2007," he added, "USAID provided nearly \$600 million for TB programs worldwide, including about \$166 million directed specifically to Africa. This is in addition to funding for TB/HIV provided under PEPFAR. USAID supports TB programs in 37 countries," focusing on 19 countries with a high burden of TB, MDR-TB or TB/HIV.

FUNDING GAP

In its effort to help fight TB, PEPFAR increased funding for HIV/TB

five-fold, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Dr. Mark Dybul said, from \$26 million to \$131 million, from fiscal years 2005 to 2007, and \$150 million is planned for fiscal 2008.

"Whether it is drug resistant or not, TB is an airborne, potentially deadly disease," Dybul said. "Because its effect on the immune system makes HIV-infected people more susceptible to infection, HIV is the greatest risk factor for developing tuberculosis."

"Urgent action is needed to build strong TB control programs with mainstreamed MDR-TB treatment elements and rapid scale up of HIV/TB interventions," Raviglione said. "Strengthened laboratories for TB diagnosis and surveillance are essential, along with infection control and more health providers and communities prepared and motivated to ensure effective and safe treatment

for patients."

WHO estimates that \$4.8 billion is needed for overall TB control in low- and middle-income countries in 2008, with \$1 billion for MDR-TB and XDR-TB. There is a finance gap of \$2.5 billion, including a \$500 million gap for MDR-TB and XDR-TB combined.

More information about the Stop TB Strategy (<http://www.who.int/tb/strategy/en/>) is available on the WHO Web site.

Additional information about tuberculosis (<http://www.cdc.gov/tb/default.htm>) is available at the CDC Web site.

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Bush Requests Nearly \$7 Billion To Strengthen . . .

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ized crime and drug trafficking in Central America and Mexico.

Finally, Negroponte appealed for \$220 million in support to the Palestinian Authority, which the United States views as a partner for peace.

"We think that the government of [President] Mahmoud Abbas is a force for peace in the area and is a constructive force, and we need to work with them in order to try to advance the peace process as best and as far as we can. And we think that right now in the remain-

ing months of President Bush's administration represent an excellent opportunity to move the peace process forward," he said.

A transcript (<http://www.state.gov/s/d/2008/101841.htm>) of Negroponte's remarks is available from the State Department Web site.

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Entrepreneur Empowers Homeowners to Save Money on Electric Bills

By Judi Hasson
Special Correspondent

Washington -- Luke Fishback is a young entrepreneur with a good idea about energy conservation. It's cheap, easy to do and saves money on electricity use.

Hoping to tap into the growing environmental conservation movement, Fishback founded a company to install electric meters in kitchens and set up Web links so that residents can see, at any given time, how much power they are using.



Luke Fishback, founder of VisibleEnergy, says the company lets anyone with a power bill track energy use. (Ken White/State Dept.)

His company, VisibleEnergy, is now in its infancy. His goal is to have 100 households signed up in the next six months for a pilot project. It will test out his theory that informed energy users are smarter consumers.

"When I bought a house, I found there were lots of opportunities. There was a lot of low-hanging fruit in so many homes on the energy-efficiency front. I wanted to figure out how to save money on my own house," said Fishback, who is 28.

And he did. He installed a \$30 meter in his kitchen and linked it to his Internet site. By monitoring his own usage, he was able to cut \$60 from his \$150 monthly utility bill. Some months, he has dropped his bill to \$65. Overall, since he has been monitoring usage, he has cut his electricity costs in half.

"When you know how much energy you are using, it prompts behavior changes. When you know just how

much it costs, you are more likely to turn off a light when you leave the room," he said.

With little money of his own to plow into the business startup, Fishback hopes to raise \$200,000 from investors willing to take a chance on a little company that just might take off. He is developing the electric meter that he expects

to patent.

He also hopes to attract private companies to advertise other conservation products on his Web site and to convince utilities to promote energy-efficiency to his customers.

THE PATH FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Entrepreneurs always have been the pillar of America's economic growth. Microsoft Corporation founder Bill Gates started by working in his parents' basement when he was a teenager. Today, he is one of the world's richest men, according to Forbes magazine.

There are plenty of other entrepreneurs in the United States trying to develop their own creative ideas, just like Fishback. On average, 437,000 people created new businesses each month over the last 10 years, according to the Kauffman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity. Fishback embarked on his first business at the age of 14, in his home-

town of Lincolnton, Georgia. Like Gates, Fishback worked out of his family's basement.

With his neighbors having to take their trash to the local dump, Fishback saw an opportunity and took it. He started a garbage-collection business for 25 homes in his rural neighborhood. He made a few thousand dollars in high school with a rented dumpster that he stored on his family's property.

Fishback had an entrepreneurial role model in his father, who started a home auction business, which he sold about 10 years ago. Fishback's brother, who advises startup tech companies, also has been helping him.

Fishback, who gave up the trash business when he graduated from high school, went to Dartmouth College, where he earned undergraduate and master's degrees in engineering. After four years working on the lunar development program for Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company in California, he moved to North Carolina with the seeds of his new idea.

Without a paycheck, he and his wife are living on savings and eating lots of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches while she attends business school at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina.

But when Fishback speaks of the soundness of his business model, he exudes optimism: "When we look at all these cool new technologies, we're kind of forgetting there are things we can do today to actually start addressing the energy issue better," he said. ♦

Renewable Resources Are Rising Stars

By Lea Terhune
Staff Writer

Washington -- At the three-day Washington International Conference on Renewable Energy (WIREC), participants from public, corporate and private sectors repeatedly stressed the importance of quickly harnessing the earth's sustainable natural resources for energy.

Global warming is an increasing threat and its effects will worsen if damaging greenhouse gas emissions are not curbed. And, with oil hovering around \$100 a barrel, there is even greater impetus for oil-dependent nations such as the United States to go green.

When President Bush addressed delegates of more than 100 nations on March 4, he picked up the theme, saying developing clean technologies was vital for security and environmental reasons.

"The United States is committed, and we're firm in our commitments, to deal with energy problem and to deal with global climate change," he said, after enumerating renewable technologies being funded by the U.S. government and businesses.

Besides federal funding, "There's a lot of smart money heading into the private sector to help develop these new technologies," Bush said.

The president said he aims "to reduce our dependence on oil by investing in technologies that will produce abundant supplies of clean and renewable energy and at the same time show the world we are good stewards of the environment."



Delegates discuss renewable energy possibilities at WIREC trade show. (State Dept./ Ken White)

First on his list were automobiles. He cited the mandatory reductions in passenger vehicle emissions of 20 percent over 10 years, a reduction mandated by the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007. He said he sees biodiesel made from oil crops and recycled waste as "the most promising" of clean fuels.

Production of corn ethanol has risen markedly, which is good for corn growers, but has a downside: rising prices of foods that depend on corn. It also cuts into profit margins of livestock ranchers and manufacturers of corn-based products. Acknowledging the problem, Bush said, "The best thing to do is not to retreat from our commitment to

alternative fuels but to spend research and development money on alternatives to ethanol made from other materials."

Cellulosic ethanol made from switchgrass and woodchips was an example he gave, adding that the U.S. Department of Energy is investing nearly \$1 billion in this research. Other technologies receiving Bush administration support are hybrid vehicles, both electric plug-in and hydrogen fuel cell-powered varieties.

Although Bush said his administration continues to back nuclear energy as an electrical power source, he also said that wind power is gaining traction in America. "This is

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Governments, Local Groups Pledge To Cut Carbon Dioxide Emissions

By Lea Terhune
Staff Writer

Washington -- The 6,000 people who attended the Washington International Renewable Energy Conference (WIREC) have dispersed, but more than 100 nations and local entities pledged to carry the work forward. Governments, towns, colleges and businesses pledged specific actions to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by adopting renewable energy.

U.S. Department of Energy Assistant Secretary Alexander Karsner told reporters "the largest consumer of energy in the world," the U. S. federal government, will ensure that 7.5 percent of its electric energy use comes from renewable resources by 2013.

Paula Dobriansky, under secretary of state for democracy and global affairs, lauded island nation Cape Verde for pledging to increase its reliance on renewable energy sources by 50 percent by 2020. Low-lying nations are the most vulnerable to the effects of global warming, which is causing a significant rise in sea level.

New Zealand committed to produce 90 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2025; Madagascar committed to 54 percent by 2020. The Council of the European Union said it would push for a minimum reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 20 percent by 2020.



Japan's Zephyr small wind turbines supply power to private homes and commercial spaces. (State Dept./Ken White)

Bangladesh, Japan, Pakistan and Tanzania were among governments that committed to policy changes favoring use of renewable energy.

Smaller groups pledged, too: colleges, businesses and towns such as Bellingham, Washington, committed to deriving 100 percent of their electrical power from renewable sources.

Dobriansky said a conference "underpinning" was that "renewables are a key part of our broader strategy to address the challenges of energy security and climate change. Also that renew-

able energy is no longer a niche market." It is "an integral part of our overall climate change policy," she said.

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY

On the sidelines of the ministerial meetings and at a concurrent trade show, delegates from 119 nations discussed problems and potential solutions.

Africa is rich in renewable resources, but "harnessing the energy is a critical problem," one African delegate told America.gov.

Hasna Khan, international director of a Bangladesh sustainable development consulting firm, said much of her firm's work is education. "It is a global issue. We have to under-

stand it" and work together, she said. Her group facilitates projects such as solar rural electrification and related microenterprises.

Satkardeep Singh, a manufacturer of solar products in India, attended WIREC to connect with buyers. His Chandigarh-based company has supplied solar technology to six power plants in India and also makes solar-powered traffic signals, he said.

Besides government and nonprofit groups, the trade show teemed with building contractors and engineers eager to make the shift to

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Renewable Resources Are Rising Stars . . .

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a new industry for us, and it's beginning to grow." The solar energy industry also is growing fast.

CONFRONTING CLIMATE CHANGE

"The United States is serious about confronting climate change," he said, adding renewable energy technologies "are an integral part of dealing with climate change." He urged the major economies to set clear goals and develop strategies to meet the goals.

"It'll be different from country to country. We've got a different energy mix than a lot of nations do," he said.

One aim is to use clean-energy technology to help developing countries improve their quality of life and economies. Bush proposed an international clean-technology fund that would provide money "from the wealthy nations to help poorer na-

tions clean up their environments."

The U.S. government is hosting WIREC 2008 to bring together the many entities in the field of renewable energy to evolve concrete strategies and make pledges to implement practices that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop sustainable energy sources in the short term. More than 100 nations are represented at the conference.

A large trade show, co-located with the conference in the Washington Convention Center, showcases technologies now on the market, from photovoltaic film and solar reflectors, to wind turbines, to a joint Volvo-Mack truck diesel-electric hybrid that is currently on the road and in use by the U.S. Air Force.

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green construction.

International companies displayed products ranging from household fuel pellets made from "poultry litter" to the Mack-Volvo joint venture carbon dioxide-neutral trucks. Solar panels, some collapsible, and photovoltaic film also were displayed.

Biomass fuels, particularly ethanol and other fuels produced from nonedible organic waste figured prominently. "E-Coal," meant to replace coal in power plants, is manufactured by NewEarth from seaweed and agricultural waste.

The corporate sector's serious approach to renewable energy was evident in booths at the trade

show by lawyers who specialize in "new energy" law.

An unanticipated side event was a press conference by corporate officers from Nth Power, Google, General Electric and Credit Suisse and a former California energy commissioner who called for early renewal of federal tax incentives for renewable energy projects. Incentives are set to expire at the end of 2008.

"Renewable energy is the biggest opportunity for economic growth and wealth creation in our lifetimes," U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary Thomas Dorr said. "The United States was perhaps a little late in the game," but in the past few years has proven that "we are very much engaged at this point," he said,

citing the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 and generous federal funding of research as examples.

Numerous panels discussed economic and environmental benefits of renewables, market adoption and finance.

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it," venture capitalist and co-founder of Sun Microsystems Vinod Khosla told a plenary session. He now concentrates his funding on clean energy startups. "These are not problems that one nation of the world can be absent from," Karsner said. "Collaboration is the great success story of this event. It marks a new era of problem solving.") ♦