

Gore wants \$100 million more to fight HIV/AIDS

U.S. has moral duty to combat disease

WASHINGTON (AP) — Asserting the United States has a "moral duty" to do more to fight AIDS, Vice President Al Gore announced a new \$100 million proposal to help Africa stop the spread of the disease.

Gore, whose presidential campaign has been dogged by AIDS activists, also released a new study on the scope and the toll of the HIV virus in Africa.

"The crisis is growing, and so must our commitment," he said. Activists from ACT-UP have pursued Gore along the campaign trail to protest administration policies that they say make it difficult to get affordable AIDS drugs to people who need them in South Africa.

On Monday, the vice president, joined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Nobel Prize winner from South Africa, announced new proposals not included in the Clinton administration's fiscal 2000 budget to fight AIDS in Africa.

Also at the event was Olivia Nantong, a 20-year-old from Uganda whose

mother succumbed to AIDS eight years ago. Gore and Sandy Thurman, the administration's AIDS czar, stood by the sobbing Nantong and whispered encouragement as she thanked the U.S. government for supporting a grass-roots group in Uganda that took care of her when she was orphaned.

"The story Olivia just told us, which wrenches our hearts — try multiplying that by 40 million to capture some idea of the magnitude of that tragedy," Gore said.

The spending proposals announced by Gore included \$48 million for AIDS education, counseling and testing, which involved a Defense Department program to train African militaries how to provide AIDS prevention training.

The remaining funds would be targeted at home- and community-based care, caring for children orphaned by AIDS and helping other countries build infrastructure to confront the spread of AIDS.

"We are the promise of

hope and change," Gore said. "We have the knowledge and the compassion and the moral duty to make a difference."

The proposals would be paid for through offsets from existing domestic programs.

Gore also released a report from the Office of National AIDS policy that found 12 million people in sub-Saharan Africa have died of AIDS in the past decade. By 2005, the death toll could reach 13,000 people per day.

AIDS Action, which represents 3,200 community-based groups in the United States, applauded Gore's announcement as a "historic breakthrough." But others were irritated that the vice president hadn't addressed concerns over trade policies affecting prescription drugs.

"Certainly, some money is better than none," said Dr. Peter Lurie, an activist with Public Citizen. "But the fact is that for not a penny the American government could stop supporting trade restrictions that are an important reason people with AIDS can't get access to drugs."

Marines

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America. The struggle had only begun.

Recruiting began June 1, 1942, but only a limited number of recruits were allowed to enter each division. Both the service record book and the enlistment contract were stamped "COLORED."

On Aug. 18, 1942 the first African-American recruit arrived at Montford Point. One hundred-nineteen other privates joined him later. From 1942 until the end of the war Montford Point was the training ground and induction point for approximately 20,000 African-American men.

Despite the insults, scrutiny, loneliness and racial discrimination they faced, the African-American troops scored as well as their white counterparts in combat training.

Prosecuted, brain washed, tired and disrespected — these Marines paved new ground. African-Americans continued to serve in segregated units until the fall of 1949 when an Executive Order from President Harry Truman established a policy of full integration. In the fall 1949, the first African-American woman enlisted in the Marines.

Memories and inescapable fidelity to the corps and country motivated the "founders" to try to assemble as many of their Marines buddies as possible from all over the country for a reunion. The first reunion was Friday, Sept. 17, 1965 — many memorable stories have been retold and reenacted.

For the past 34 years the Montford Point Marines have been celebrating their accomplishments. The evening of Saturday, July 17 is definitely a day I will remember.

The keynote speaker was Gen. Dake. He spoke of the transition of the Marine Corps to a zero tolerance to prejudice organization and the importance it made in American history. I felt very honored to be invited to play an active role in the Hall of Fame Awards. Many of the "Founding Fathers" were inducted into the Hall of Fame of the Montford Point Marine Association.

The sea of gray hair and uniforms, smiles a mile wide recounting stories and strutting with pride — quite an exhilarating site. There were also many other awards and accolades given, including those for a distinguished military career, commitment to the community and commitment to God and country. This evening was also the swearing in of the new association officers.

Quite an evening to remember a part of living history: The Montford Point Marines truly paved the road for others.

The mission statement of the Montford Point Marine Association: "To promote and preserve the strong bonds of friendship born from shared adversities and to devote ourselves to the furtherance of these friendships as Marines through sharing of experiences and accomplishments to insure more peaceful times."

The objective of the association is one of camaraderie, fellowship, Espirit de Corps and civic service.



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