

WORLD BRIEFS

EXPERTS CALL FOR TIGHTER CONTROL ON SMALL ARMS

ACCRA, Ghana (PANA)—Social researchers and ministers earlier this month called for the tightening of controls on small arms entering Ghana, saying existing statutes regulating weapons were outdated and ineffective. This was stated at a seminar in Accra on the manufacture and proliferation of small arms in Ghana, attended by the Minister of the Interior Alhaji Malik Al-Hassan Yakubu and Attorney General and Minister of Justice Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo. "The government is determined to nip in the bud activities of illegal traders in small weapons in an attempt to reduce drastically the alarming proliferation of small arms in Ghana," said Alhaji Yakubu. "In this regard, some of the old rules and regulations governing arms and ammunition will be amended or repealed to reflect this new focus," he added. Small arms include single and double barrel shotguns, pump action, AK-47 assault rifles, pistols and revolvers. Although Alhaji Yakubu admitted his office authorized the production of 19,468 shotguns in 2000, he said local manufacturers produced a large percentage of unregistered weapons used to commit various crimes.

FIFTEEN BATTALIONS PERMANENTLY MOBILIZED FOR ECOMOG

LUSAKA, Zambia (PANA)—For the first time in the history of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the 15 member states are ready to place a battalion each at the disposal of ECOMOG, the West African peacekeeping force. The executive secretary of the Abuja-based regional grouping, Lansana Kouyate, told PANA in Lusaka the chiefs-of-staff in ECOWAS countries made the proposal, which has been approved by the heads of state. "Each country knows exactly the number of troops it must put at the disposal of ECOWAS," Kouyate said, indicating that ECOMOG has been restructured and the forces retained in each country form "the ECOWAS army." This "army" is supposed to carry out regular maneuvers, possibly with the assistance of RECAP and the U.S. It will have at its disposal minimum equipment the international community had put at the disposal of ECOMOG in Sierra Leone—about 60 vehicles and communication equipment. The equipment is currently stocked at the headquarters of the ECOWAS in Abuja, Nigeria.

NAMIBIAN WOMEN BOXERS OUT OF AFRICAN CHAMPIONSHIP

WINDHOEK, Namibia (PANA)—Namibia has decided not to send pugilists to the first ever African Women's Boxing Championship in Cairo, Egypt, in August. The Namibian news agency quoted General Secretary of the Namibia Amateur Boxing Federation Joe Kaperu as saying the women had not yet attained the required standards to compete at international level. Kaperu said, however, that Namibian women would continue preparing for future events, including next year's world championships. The women are busy training within their local clubs and preparing to compete in the regional championships, to be held in Oshakati, Namibia, Aug. 8 through Aug. 10. The event will be jointly held with the junior championships. About 34 women are expected to participate in the regional championships. Kaperu said Mauritius, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, South Africa, Malawi, Botswana, Egypt, Algeria and Morocco had confirmed their participation in the African Boxing Championship in Cairo.

TRIPOLI COMMENDS INITIATIVE BY U.S. PHARMACEUTICAL GROUP

TRIPOLI, Libya (PANA)—Libya has commended an initiative by a U.S. pharmaceutical group, Fayser, to distribute free of charge HIV/AIDS drugs to 50 poor countries. Libyan foreign ministry officials described the initiative as "a positive response" to Libyan leader Col. Muammar Kadhafi's request during last April's African Summit on AIDS held in Abuja. At that conference, Col. Kadhafi called on the U.S. and Western governments, as well as Japan, to provide treatment to people infected with the virus. He also called on pharmaceutical companies in America and Europe to donate some portion of their profits to purchase and distribute free AIDS drugs to the needy. Reacting to the initiative, Hassouna Chawishe, Libyan minister of information and culture, said Libya would cooperate with the U.S. group and other companies to ensure Kadhafi's call continues to receive a response.

INTERNATIONAL

Project Africa eases Swaziland's trouble

By Charlene Muhammad
Special to Sentinel-Voice

MBABANE, Swaziland — Jackie Bowier's life will never be the same. Not after her recent visit to treat Xollie, a 17-year-old AIDS patient in a rural Swaziland village. Xollie's mother died two years ago, leaving her in the care of her elderly grandmother. The fragile young woman is in the last stages of AIDS, thrusting her 1-year-old child into the care of her paternal grandmother.

"She is in so much pain from her head to toe that I could not even touch her hand gently. And she has not been able to eat or drink for a few days because of the oral sores, which cover her face and mouth. I doubt that she will make it through the week," Mrs. Bowier, a physician's

assistant at Riverside's Molina Medical Center, said.

Xollie's bamboo mat, spread on the dusty floor in her village hut, with no water or electricity, provided little comfort for her small, frail frame.

"It hurts me dearly to know that any human being would have to spend their last hours or days in such an inhumane condition. I mean, suffering is bad enough, but that kind is not right," Mrs. Bowier said.

Mrs. Bowier was part of a team of mostly Black U.S. doctors, nurses and support staff that traveled to Swaziland for a 14-day mission to treat HIV/AIDS patients. Invited by King Mswati III, and armed with over \$350,000 worth of HIV/AIDS antiviral and other medicines and clothing,

Project Africa toured and treated patients in the Mbabane Government Hospital, Public Health Unit, Salvation Army Clinics and rural clinics.

Dr. Jerome Griffin, Project Africa's CEO and professor of African Studies at Laney College in Oakland, established the Economic Development Fund Foundation/Project Africa in 1997 as a non-profit, non-governmental organization providing humanitarian aid to Sub-Saharan Africa.

While serving as a research fellow in Nigeria and Ghana in West Africa, Dr. Griffin saw the problems associated with malnutrition and HIV/AIDS firsthand, and was determined to help ease suffering in the motherland.

"Our primary purpose is

to support and assist the kingdom of Swaziland in stabilizing the disease and increase the quality of life for those living with HIV," Dr. Griffin explained.

"It is the divine plan for anyone who God has blessed to give back to the underserved populations here in the U.S. and abroad," he added.

Project Africa's initial 15-member team first treated over 600 patients in 1998 at a Liberian refugee camp in Ghana. The long line of refugees, Dr. Griffin recalled, enveloped a shack converted into a clinic during the 10-day trip. Project Africa's all-volunteer staff revisited war-torn areas in Liberia in 1999, treated over 1,500 patients in 10 days in Ghana in 1999, and over 1,000 refugees in Ghana last June.

United States key supplier of surplus weapons

NEW YORK (IPS)—The United States is a primary supplier of post-Cold War surplus weapons to Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, according to a new study.

The weapons, ranging from fighter aircraft and helicopters to armored personnel carriers and small arms, have either been sold at bargain basement prices or given without charge to cash-strapped nations fighting for economic survival, says the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC), a think-tank based in Germany.

The organization says that surplus American weapons have been transferred to Senegal, the Philippines, Bra-

zil, Mexico, Colombia and Egypt, and also to such U.S. allies as Israel.

The list also includes Argentina, Algeria, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Grenada, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Lithuania, Mexico, Morocco, Oman, Peru, Poland and Thailand.

"In the United States, strategic interests and a strong producers' lobby directed the distribution of excess American weapons," the BICC says in a 175-page study entitled "Global Disarmament, Demilitarization and Demobilization."

Released to coincide with the two-week U.N. conference on small arms, the study

says the development of new military technology is not only providing fresh tools for the military preeminence of the United States and Western nations, but is also hardening resistance to disarmament, provoking rearmament, and "creating new waves of surplus weapons spreading out to poorer countries."

Despite the "decade of disarmament" that followed the end of the Cold War, most of the surplus weapons ended up in the global arms market, says BICC.

Virtually all of the older model U.S. F-16 fighter planes have been offered to Eastern European nations, notes BICC, so that the U.S. Air Force could use the pro-

ceeds to finance its own acquisition of new F-16 and F-18 fighter aircraft, and also F-22s with stealth technology.

"From the U.S. perspective, the Eastern European market is of particular interest for the sale of used military hardware," the study adds.

Several of the Eastern European countries, including Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, are planning to modernize their armed forces after their recent membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

"The Cold War between Russian and American mili-

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Tourism highlights differences on Caribbean integration

NASSAU, Bahamas (IPS)—The fun, sun, sea and sugar-white beaches of the Caribbean have long been marketed to European and North American visitors as heaven on earth.

At the summit of regional leaders, however, tourism is highlighting differences over the future of Caribbean economic integration.

Bahamas Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham, incoming chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and host of the 22nd annual CARICOM Summit here, urged his 14 fellow heads of government to speed efforts to promote the Caribbean as a single destination in order to generate gains from economies of scale.

"For the purposes of Caribbean tourism, we need to

think of the Caribbean region as a single nation. Every study shows warm weather vacationers are largely destination collectors," he says. "No matter how much they enjoy an experience in one warm weather destination, vacationers yearn to explore another before returning to the prior experience. We must, therefore, cooperate to ensure that such vacationers do their exploring among Caribbean destinations."

However, Ralph Gonsalves, prime minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and CARICOM's newest head of government, is assailing his counterparts for not making the region a friendlier place for people whose home countries are washed by the Caribbean Sea.

"The intra-regional trav-

eler is by and large looked upon with suspicion by immigration authorities of sister CARICOM territories," Gonsalves says. "It is even more difficult than in colonial times for a CARICOM national to enter the country of another."

"While Canadians are welcomed with open arms in Barbados, St. Lucians and Vincentians are generally treated as unwanted strangers at the gate. Meanwhile, Rastafarians are discriminated against by every customs and immigration officer in practically every country of the region, possibly, save and except Jamaica, and Barbadians are caricatured as smart men who must be watched closely at ports of entry," he adds. "All this is totally unacceptable. Neither

CARICOM nor some other form of union could survive these indignities and irrationalities."

Intra-regional travel accounted for 77 percent of all tourist arrivals in 1995, the World Tourism Organization said. By 2020, the figure is expected to fall to 62 percent as more local people opt to travel out of the Caribbean.

Officials at the summit agreed that single-destination marketing—which would allow tourists to island-hop within the Caribbean without having to seek separate visas for each country visited—will be vital to ensuring the Caribbean continues to post the fastest growth rates for tourism in the Americas. The region faces the prospect of increased competition

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