

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Weekly Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

January 24, 2014

U.S. Agencies Join Forces to Combat Human Trafficking	1
Sailors Ready to Create Their Sculpture at Sapporo Snow Festival.....	1
Secretary Kerry Says World Has Obligation to Bring Peace to Syrian People	2
2013 Ranks Among 10 Warmest Years on Record.....	3
U.S. Will Nominate San Antonio Missions as World Heritage Site.....	3
International Partners Cited in Environment Conservation Awards.....	4

U.S. Agencies Join Forces to Combat Human Trafficking

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 23 January 2014

Washington — The Obama administration, as part of its commitment to fight human trafficking, has produced the first Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States.

The five-year plan, released January 14, lays out a path for increased collaboration among more than 15 U.S. federal government agencies. “Traditionally, individual federal agencies provide support to victims within their particular areas of responsibility,” the plan notes. “Coordinating anti-trafficking efforts at the federal level is crucial to ensuring victims receive comprehensive services.”

The plan describes the steps that federal agencies will take to ensure that all victims of human trafficking in the United States are identified and have access to the services they need to recover and to rebuild their lives.

President Obama has condemned human trafficking as a “modern incarnation of slavery.”

“Human trafficking is a denial of our common humanity and an affront to our ideals as Americans,” Obama says in a letter opening the report. “Survivors of human trafficking deserve holistic, streamlined and compassionate assistance.”

President Obama announced his intentions to develop the interagency anti-trafficking plan in September 2012. The completed plan integrates input from trafficking survivors. The plan says better housing and medical care services need to be provided to survivors, as well as legal services.

“While human trafficking victims may be eligible for T or U nonimmigrant status, which allows victims to remain and work in the United States and assist law enforcement authorities in the investigation or prosecution of human trafficking cases, many victims continue to face legal constraints challenging their recovery process,” the report says. “The integration of the legal services network into the victim services network is a new effort that will require extensive collaboration and coordination. This plan seeks to address these issues.”

The plan also calls for expanded data collection and research efforts. Current statistics on the crime of human trafficking are limited, the plan says. “Data collection and evidence-based research are sorely needed to inform federal, state, territorial, tribal, local, and nongovernmental-organization service provision,” it says.

The plan defines human trafficking as a crime that involves the exploitation of a person for the purpose of compelled labor or a commercial sex act. While it is difficult to measure the magnitude of human trafficking, the International Labour Organization estimates that more than 20 million men, women and children are victimized by forced labor and sex trafficking worldwide, including the United States.

“While there is no defining characteristic that all victims share, traffickers frequently prey on individuals who are poor, vulnerable, living in an unsafe situation, or are in search of a better life,” the report says. “Whether made to work in agriculture, a factory or a strip club, forced into commercial sex, or abused in a home as a domestic servant, [U.S.] federal law recognizes these people as victims of human trafficking.”

Although the plan (PDF, 3.5MB) focuses on combating human trafficking in the United States, President Obama, in designating January 2014 as “National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month,” called upon the international community to join forces in ending this scourge.

“Because modern-day slavery is a global tragedy, combating it requires international action,” Obama said in his proclamation.

Dismantling trafficking networks and aiding victims are only part of the work that needs to be done by the United States and the international community, Obama said.

“We must also address the underlying forces that push so many into bondage,” the president said. “We must develop economies that create legitimate jobs, build a global sense of justice that says no child should ever be exploited, and empower our daughters and sons with the same chances to pursue their dreams.”

Sailors Ready to Create Their Sculpture at Sapporo Snow Festival

23 January 2014

This article was originally published on the U.S. Navy website on January 23.

Misawa Air Base, Japan — Seven U.S. sailors stationed at Misawa Air Base will soon take part in the 65th annual Sapporo Snow Festival in Hokkaido, Japan.

The team, nicknamed the Sapporo Seven, will build a snow sculpture on behalf of their unit, Naval Air Facility Misawa. This year is the 31st anniversary of Misawa sailors participating in the festival, which draws about 2 million spectators each year.

In recent years, Misawa sailors have sculpted giant anchors, a replica of the Lone Sailor sculpture in Washington, and a frosty facsimile of the aircraft carrier USS George Washington. Next week, the Sapporo Seven will travel to Sapporo to build something even more ambitious.

"We're going to build the famous U.S. Navy Seabee logo: The Fighting Bee," said Chief Petty Officer Billy Harger, a native of Pearl City, Hawaii, and this year's team leader. "I think this is a great sculpture to attempt for the 65th annual Sapporo Snow Festival, and a cool way for our team to honor my fellow Seabees, who will be celebrating the 72nd anniversary of their creation March 5th."

The team will depart Misawa next week and have only a few days to build the sculpture in time for the festival's kickoff on February 5. Adding to the challenge is that all of the snow team's members originally hail from warm-weather states, and none of them have any previous snow-sculpture experience. This does not faze Harger and his team.

"The U.S. Navy Seabee philosophy is 'can do,' and we certainly will do," Harger said. "Regardless of our experience, the extreme weather, or any other deterrents we might face, the team will create this sculpture on time for all festival-goers to enjoy."

The Sapporo Seven will once again be hosted by Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) members at Camp Sapporo. Misawa and Camp Sapporo have an ongoing relationship that has grown even closer in recent years, with both commands hosting bilateral events for the other.

"I'm really looking forward to staying at Camp Sapporo while we take part in the festival," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Erin Devenberg, originally from Tehachapi, California. "I've heard so many wonderful things about the Camp Sapporo hospitality. I can't wait to have the opportunity to interact with the JGSDF, and help enhance our services' great friendship."

"This is a fantastic opportunity to bring a little piece of the U.S. Navy to a part of Japan that isn't exposed to it very often," Harger said. "Sapporo is such a wonderful city, and we're honored to represent the U.S. Navy and our respective commands during this festival."

Along with Harger and Devenberg, the Sapporo Seven includes Petty Officer 2nd Class Alexianna Morton, who originally hails from Antioch, California; Petty Officer 2nd Class Justin Cable, a native of Nederland, Texas; Petty Officer 2nd Class Christopher Dorrough, who comes from Gadsden, Alabama; Seaman Ariel Hogue, originally from Pensacola, Florida; and Seaman Andrew

Handley, who hails from Stroud, Oklahoma.

Secretary Kerry Says World Has Obligation to Bring Peace to Syrian People

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer |
22 January 2014

Washington — Syria's conflict began as a peaceful protest by schoolchildren and escalated into a civil war with thousands dead and millions more displaced from their homes, Secretary of State John Kerry says.

"If we put our common energies together, we can forge a resolution that can provide peace to the region and peace to the people of Syria," Kerry said January 22 at a one-day Syrian peace conference in Montreux, Switzerland. Kerry told delegates, "We really need to deal with reality. There is no way — no way possible in the imagination — that the man who has led the brutal response to his own people could regain the legitimacy to govern."

"The right to lead a country does not come from torture, nor barrel bombs, nor Scud missiles. It comes from the consent of the people," Kerry added.

The negotiations, known as Geneva II, are part of a U.N.-backed international conference with the aim of brokering a political resolution to the conflict begun in March 2011 that has created a massive humanitarian crisis. The international community is seeking to implement what is known as the Geneva Communiqué, a plan agreed to on June 30, 2012, that would establish a transitional government in Syria that would bring an end to the conflict through peaceful dialogue and negotiations. The Assad family has governed Syria since 1970.

The peace negotiations are expected to continue through the weekend as nations gather in Geneva and in nearby Davos for the annual World Economic Forum, which Kerry plans to attend. Achieving compromise and an agreement to move forward is a crucial first step in ending the violence and civil strife, Kerry said. More than 30 nations were participating in the conference.

According to the United Nations, since the civil war began more than 130,000 civilians have been killed; 2.3 million are registered refugees; an additional 6.5 million people are displaced inside Syria; and there have been at least 17 confirmed cases of polio, which had been eradicated in Syria more than a decade ago.

Kerry said the only thing standing between the Syrian people and peace is one man and his family "stubborn[ly] clinging to power."

"We have not only an opportunity, but we have an obligation to find a way forward so that the people of

Syria can choose their leadership, know peace, and for 9 million refugees, finally be able to return home in dignity," Kerry told delegates.

2013 Ranks Among 10 Warmest Years on Record

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 22 January 2014

Washington — A scientific summary of 2013 weather data from around the world finds that the year ranked among the 10 hottest on record. The assessment comes from the State of the Climate — Annual 2013 report compiled by the National Climatic Data Center.

The center is managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which released a summary of the report on January 22.

The global analysis finds that 2013 ties with 2003 as the fourth warmest year globally since records began in 1880. The combined land and ocean surface temperature was 0.62 degrees Celsius above the average for the 20th century.

Including the findings for 2013, nine out of 10 of the warmest years in the record maintained by U.S. scientific agencies since 1880 have occurred in the 21st century. Further, 2013 marks the 37th consecutive year that the yearly global temperature was above average, according to the Data Center analysis.

Most areas of the world experienced above-average temperatures last year. Central Asia, western Ethiopia, eastern Tanzania and southern and western Australia reported record warm temperatures over land. The highest temperatures ever were also documented in the southwestern Pacific, parts of the central Pacific and an area of the Indian Ocean.

Nowhere on Earth in 2013 was record cold detected, according to the analysis.

Planetary weather patterns created cooler-than-average spring temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere, including parts of the United States, Russia, Europe and Japan. France, for example, had its coolest spring since 1986 and the Netherlands recorded its coolest spring in more than 40 years.

Farther south in Europe, warmer-than-average spring conditions prevailed, as reported from Croatia, Montenegro and Hungary, for example.

The Arctic was considerably warmer than average, as was much of central and northern Africa, the eastern Mediterranean and much of China. The western Greenland coast experienced its all-time warmest March, and Norway and Sweden each recorded one of their five

warmest Mays in more than a century.

Mexico recorded warmest-ever temperatures during July and August. Argentina came close, reporting its second-warmest year since it began national record-keeping in 1961.

In East Africa, Kenya also reported above-average high temperatures during several months of 2013. In West Africa, Ghana reached an all-time record high of 43 degrees C on March 6 in Navrongo.

Some parts of Asia experienced a warmer-than-average summer. Japan recorded its hottest summer on record, and on August 12, recorded the highest temperature ever observed in the nation, 41 degrees C at Shimanto. Southern China sweltered in a persistent heat wave through most of July and August.

Australia also marked some all-time records in 2013, according to the global analysis. January was reportedly the hottest month ever observed, and extreme warmth from the previous December through February sizzled the season to become the hottest Australian summer ever recorded.

Annual precipitation fell at a near-average level globally, but that finding must be weighed against record floods and droughts occurring in some locations.

Queensland and New South Wales, Australia, experienced major flooding in the aftermath of tropical low-pressure systems, with some record high-water marks surpassed.

Neither did they think of it as an average year in Israel, Lebanon and Jordan, where rare snow fell in 2013. Jerusalem recorded a 20-centimeter snowfall, its deepest in more than 20 years.

The year is remembered as one of drought in northeastern Brazil, with the largest rainfall deficit since 1979. Northern and eastern New Zealand also recall 2013 as a drought year, about the driest in 70 years.

U.S. Will Nominate San Antonio Missions as World Heritage Site

22 January 2014

Washington — The United States is nominating the San Antonio Missions, including the Alamo, for inclusion on the World Heritage List, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell announced January 17.

"World Heritage sites represent an incredible opportunity for the United States to tell the world the whole story of America and the remarkable diversity of our people and

beauty of our land," Jewell said. "The San Antonio Missions represents a vital part of our nation's Latino heritage and the contributions of Latinos to the building of our country."

This nomination will be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in the summer of 2015. If approved by the World Heritage Committee, it would join 21 other U.S. sites on the list.

The UNESCO World Heritage List was established under the World Heritage Convention, a treaty for natural site conservation and cultural site preservation. The United States was the first nation to ratify the pact, which was proposed by President Richard Nixon in 1972.

There are 981 sites in 160 of the 190 signatory countries, including such iconic places as the Taj Mahal, Stonehenge, the Great Barrier Reef, Yellowstone National Park and the Statue of Liberty National Monument in the United States.

The Department of the Interior is undertaking the nomination with the full cooperation and written support of all the property owners within the boundaries of the nominated area, including the National Park Service, the State of Texas, the Catholic Archdiocese of San Antonio, Bexar County, the City of San Antonio, the San Antonio River Authority, the Espada Ditch Company, the San Juan Ditch Water Supply Corporation, and Los Compadres de San Antonio Missions National Historical Park.

These owners and partner organizations cooperated to prepare the nomination in consultation with the National Park Service's Office of International Affairs, the principal technical agency for the United States' participation in the Convention.

The nomination will be submitted through the U.S. Department of State to the offices of the World Heritage Centre in Paris. After reviews by World Heritage Centre staff and by the International Council for Monuments and Sites, the World Heritage Committee – a body of 21 nations elected among the signatories to the convention – will consider it for inscription on the World Heritage List.

Inscription as a World Heritage Site does not impose any legal restrictions on property owners or neighbors of sites, nor does it give the United Nations any management authority or ownership rights.

THE SAN ANTONIO MISSIONS

The San Antonio Missions in the U.S. state of Texas are considered the most complete and intact example of

Spain's efforts to colonize, evangelize and defend the northern frontier of New Spain during the period when Spain controlled the largest empire in the world.

Situated along a 7.7-mile (12.4-kilometer) stretch of the San Antonio River, these five Spanish colonial mission complexes were built in the early 18th century. More than 50 standing structures, archaeological resources and landscape features include labores, a rancho, residences, a grist mill, granaries, workshops, wells, lime kilns, churches, conventos, and perimeter walls for protection.

The collection of missions also includes extensive agricultural irrigation systems of acequias, dams and an aqueduct.

Under the World Heritage Committee's operational guidelines, properties must be included on a country's Tentative List before they can be nominated. The San Antonio Missions were included on the U.S. World Heritage Tentative List resubmitted in January 2008.

There are 12 more properties or groups of properties on that list. Of these, the "Monumental Earthworks of Poverty Point" in Louisiana was nominated in 2013 and will be considered by the World Heritage Committee in the summer of 2014. A nomination is being developed for a group of buildings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Decisions on the timing and sequence for other nominations will be made periodically by the Department of Interior, according to the January 17 announcement.

International Partners Cited in Environment Conservation Awards

21 January 2014

Washington – Twenty public-private partnerships, including some involving North American governments, have won the 2013 Partners in Conservation Awards for achieving "exemplary conservation results through cooperation and community engagement," the U.S. Department of the Interior says.

"The Department of the Interior is proud to recognize the accomplishments of those who are innovating and collaborating in ways that address today's complex conservation and stewardship challenges," Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell said at an awards ceremony at Interior headquarters in Washington January 16.

The Partners in Conservation Awards recognize outstanding examples of conservation legacies achieved "when the Department of the Interior engages groups and individuals representing a wide range of backgrounds, ages and interests to work collaboratively to renew lands and resources," the department said. The 20 award

winners include recipients representing more than 260 organizations and individuals from across the United States and the world.

Several awards have binational or international partners. Welcoming senior leaders from the government of Mexico, for example, Jewell presented an award to the Minute 319 Bi-National Partnership. The award recognizes agencies of the Mexico government, states in the Colorado River Basin and water users and environmental organizations in both countries as well as partners from the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey. Minute 319 has been touted as one of the most innovative negotiated agreements between nations to include environmental river flows. Signed in November 2012, the five-year Minute 319 provides "the agreement under the authority and framework of the 1944 Water Treaty to implement actions under consideration by multiple administrations dating back to the late 1990s," Interior said.

Likewise, the U.S.-Canada Huron-Erie Corridor Initiative, also honored with an award, brings together 34 federal, tribal, First Nation, state, provincial, local and nongovernmental groups. The Huron-Erie Corridor (HEC) carries the international border between Canada and the U.S. throughout its entire length; it is widely recognized as one of the world's busiest waterways. Spawning habitat in these waterways was reduced when rocks were removed to improve navigation.

The HEC Partnership employed a science-based, engineered approach to construct three fish spawning reefs in the Detroit and St. Clair rivers. Pre- and post-construction monitoring revealed 14 native fish species are using the reefs, including the endangered northern madtom and threatened lake sturgeon, Interior said. Further, partners videotaped large, mature lake sturgeon spawning at one restoration site before construction was even completed. "With such tangible results, the HEC Partnership is planning seven additional fish spawning habitat remediation projects by 2015, resulting in an estimated 10 acres of habitat per river," Interior said.

Diverse partners in the Atlantic Canyons-Pathways to the Abyss partnership include U.S. government agencies as well as private research institutes. Among these partners is the Netherlands Institute of Sea Research at the Island of Texel, Netherlands. The partners collaborate on the use of robotic underwater vehicles and other cutting-edge tools to discover and research deep-water coral habitats. Results from deep-sea communities and historical shipwrecks off the mid-Atlantic coast will strengthen the protection and conservation of these habitats from potential impact related to energy development, the Interior Department said.

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