

PeaceWatch

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UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE ■ WASHINGTON, D.C. ■ www.usip.org

Future Peacemakers

Twentieth Class of Peace Essay Contest Winners Spends Educational Week in D.C.



State winners and USIP staff enjoyed the view along the Potomac River from the roof of the Embassy of Sweden before the awards ceremony.

The Institute welcomed this year's National Peace Essay Contest winners to a week of educational activities in Washington, D.C. in late June. The winners, high school students who submitted the best essay from their state or U.S. territory on the topic of youth and violent conflict, participated in a five-day program of meetings, seminars, and workshops on U.S. foreign policy and international peace. They met with prominent experts from government and academia and spent a day on Capitol Hill meeting with their elected representatives, including Illinois Senators **Dick Durbin** and **Barack Obama**.

The students—whose essays were chosen from more than a thousand entries—also visited museums, dined at some of D.C.'s varied ethnic restaurants, and got to know one another. They attended an award ceremony at the Embassy of Sweden keynoted by Ugandan mediator and current Institute senior fellow **Betty Bigombe**, who spoke from firsthand experience about youth and violent conflict.

Wendy Cai of Tempe, Arizona, won the top national prize of a \$10,000 college scholarship. **Cathy Sun** of Williamsville, New York, took second prize (a \$5,000 scholarship), and **Anita Hofschneider** of Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands won third prize (a \$2,500 scholarship).

"Our hope is that today's contest winners will become tomorrow's peace builders."

—**Dr. Richard Solomon**

Institute president **Dr. Richard Solomon** said, "Every year, my colleagues and I are deeply impressed by the level of effort and dedication that high school students display in their essays about complex international issues. Our hope is that today's contest winners will become tomorrow's peace builders."

This is the twentieth anniversary of the Institute's essay contest. **Raina Kim**, who managed the contest, said she was delighted

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Future Peacemakers

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▲ Excited students pose with Institute senior fellow Betty Bigombe. Clockwise from the left are Ben Gonin (VT), Graham Herli (CO), Mike Conrad (WA), Donald Warneke (MN), Jonathan Emont (NJ), Albert Wang (MD), and Tiffany Wen (DE).

Mattias Nikaj (CA) had questions about the members of OAS. ▼



by the range of participating students: "One of the strengths of this program is the outstanding students. They represent varied cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds as well as highly developed and unique personalities." Among the winners this year are unicyclists, debaters, ranch hands, aspiring filmmakers, writers, linguists, historians and handfuls of National Merit Scholarship finalists. "Young people of this country are motivated, intellectual, curious, and compassionate."

"The peace essay contest is the longest continuous program at the Institute and represents the Institute's commitment to educating the next generation of peacebuilders," said Pamela Aall, vice president for the Institute's education program. "Over the years, we have been extraordinarily fortunate in both the quality of the students we've hosted and the generosity of the many people and institutions that have helped us out."

Among the activities in which the students participated this year, two stood out for California state winner Matthias Nikaj. He attended a congressional hearing on U.S.-Russia relations sponsored by Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) and featuring former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. "It was fascinating to hear Brzezinski talk about this challenging and enigmatic country," Nikaj said. And he sat next to Betty Bigombe at the awards dinner. "Hearing about her experiences was amazing," he said.

Nikaj, who was born in Albania and immigrated to the United States a decade ago with his family, just finished his freshman year at Francis Barker School in San Diego. His paper, on the challenges of reintegrating youth soldiers in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, contends that the international community could learn important lessons from the contrasting experiences of the two countries.

National contest winner Wendy Cai, a junior from Corona Del Sol High School in Tempe, Arizona, examined the experiences of youthful ex-combatants in Uganda and Sierra Leone. On the basis of that analysis, she proposed that future interventions be modeled as holistic programs that emphasize youth participation, comprehensive education, a community reconciliation program, and enhanced psychosocial support. For her, the high point of the week was meeting people like Holly Burkhalter and Jimmy Briggs. Burkhalter is the vice president for the International Justice Mission and a member of USIP's board of directors; Briggs is the author of *Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers Go to War*. "I was really struck by their passion for what they are doing. It showed there can be a real nobility in politics," said Cai.

Kyle Mallinak, a graduating senior from Kingsport, Tennessee, gave the student address at the awards dinner. He observed that the students this year wrote about people who were no older than themselves, and often much younger. Mallinak caught the audience's attention when he said, "The difficult task of preserving peace can be expressed in the words of none other than Leon Trotsky, who once noted, 'You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you.'" Far too many children, he said, have no choice in confronting the horror and violence around them.

Many of the essay contest winners back up their interest in peace building with volunteer work. For example, Cara Saunders, of Colby, Maine, spent last summer building a school and library in Ghana under the auspices of a British nonprofit organization. She said she decided at age thirteen that her life's mission was to help those less fortunate. She made that decision after reading Angelina Jolie's book, *Notes from My Travels*, about the actress's work with refugees.

PeaceWatch

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Community College Outreach



▲ At the courtyard of Organization of American States, students were awed by the “Peace Tree”, planted by President William Howard Taft during the building’s dedication ceremonies in 1910.



▲ Holly Burkhalter (Vice President, International Justice Mission) talked to students about challenges of working to advocate for human rights for children in conflict.



▲ Parents joined USIP Vice President for Education Pamela Aall expressing how proud and excited they were for the students.



▲ USIP Executive Vice President Patricia Thomson talked with Donald Warneke (MN) and Ben Gronin (VT) over lunch before her presentation on the Institute’s work.



▲ Steven Williams (MS) and Erin Cochran (OH) were deeply engaged in what the speakers had to say about working to help youth in conflict.



▲ Illinois winner Yi Lu poses with Senator Richard Durbin and Senator Barack Obama. Both senators addressed the state-level winners of the National Peace Essay Contest, who visited Capitol Hill.

Eighteen community college faculty members from around the country attended a seminar on global peace and security at the Institute in May. The seminar featured presentations by leading scholars and practitioners, including Institute staff. **David Smith**, senior program officer in the Institute’s Education program, organized the event. He explained the rationale: “Historically, community colleges have been on the front line of public education in areas of national significance and provide the higher-education entry point for America’s growing immigrant population. Because of their draw to new arrivals, open enrollment policies, and affordable costs, it is not surprising that community colleges are often referred to as ‘democracy’s colleges.’”

Smith said he was particularly concerned with helping community college teachers develop curricula appropriate for their students. “The intricacies of global conflict present chal-

See *Outreach*, page 14



▲ Wendy Cai (AZ) and Cathy Sun (NY) were congratulated by Betty Bumpers, a member of the Board of Directors and J. Robinson West, the Chairman of the Board.



Institute Vice President David Smock Advises President Bush

Oval Office Meeting Focuses on Solutions to Ethno-Racial Conflict

David Smock, vice president of the Institute's Center for Mediation and Conflict Resolution, briefed President **George W. Bush** at a White House Oval Office meeting in early June. Smock and five other prominent social scientists—including former USIP senior fellow **Phebe Marr**—were asked to brief the president about ethnic/sectarian conflict and how general principles of conflict resolution could apply to the situation in Iraq. Vice President **Dick Cheney** and National Security Adviser **Stephen Hadley** attended the meeting. “The president was very attentive, curious, and responsive,” said Smock. “I spoke about the work the Institute is doing, not only in Iraq, but in the Balkans, Somalia, Kashmir, and Israel/

Palestine, as it relates to understanding ethnic conflict and reconciliation.”

Smock briefed the group for ten minutes, followed by a short give-and-take with the president. In his presentation, Smock distilled many of the key insights he has developed over years of research on religion and peacemaking. Among them—

1. Contrary to popular notions, ethnic conflict usually does not derive from ancient hatreds.
2. So-called religious conflict is rarely purely religious. The issues at stake in such conflicts usually are only tangentially related to theological disputes.
3. Religion can be a force for good: Invoking religious traditions of healing and compassion can bring adversaries together. The shared experience of the sacred can provide a common forum for gathering diverse people. For example, religious leaders from Iran originally refused to meet with political leaders in the United States; they did agree, however, to meet at a National Prayer Breakfast.
4. When dealing with ethnic and religious conflict, it is vital to address the underlying issues of social justice and fairness.
5. Joint action plans can help adversaries come together. Opponents can overcome their differences via the challenge of addressing shared problems.
6. One can delegitimize extremists by buttressing traditionalists. Institute projects demonstrate how religious extremists often misquote traditional religious texts.
7. Constituencies for peace can be developed by building a coalition of



like-minded people. For instance, in Kashmir, in addition to promoting peace, the Institute is working with Pugwash International to encourage businesspeople from India, Pakistan, and Kashmir to collaborate in boosting Kashmir's economy.

8. It is critical to talk to your enemies. Boycotting the opposing side just because you do not approve of what they do or say rarely advances the cause of peace.

Coincidentally, four of the five other speakers at the Oval Office meeting had previously worked at or received funding from the Institute. **I. William Zartmann** has published several books through the Institute Press and was a senior fellow at the Institute in 1992–93; **Donald Horowitz** has twice received grants from the Institute; **Phebe Marr** was a senior fellow at the Institute for two years in 2004–06; and **Richard Rose** was a grantee in 1991–92.

Smock's own scholarship and on-the-ground work have garnered growing attention of late. In March, he received the Commitment to Peacemaking Award from

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“The president was very attentive, curious, and responsive.” —David Smock



The Institute's David Smock met with President George W. Bush in the Oval Office to discuss options in Iraq.



Prospects for Peace in Colombia

Institute-Sponsored Meetings Develop Strategies for Peace Building

On May 22 and 23, 2007, the U.S. Institute of Peace convened two events to discuss evolving prospects for peace in Colombia—one on Capitol Hill on “The Outlook for Negotiated Solutions in Colombia” and the other at the Institute on “Peacemaking and Mediation in Colombia.” The events brought together leading figures from the non-governmental organization (NGO), academic, legal, and diplomatic communities. They examined the status of current talks in Havana between the National Liberation Army (known by its Spanish acronym ELN) guerrillas and the government of Colombia; briefed the Washington policy community on initiatives surrounding a humanitarian accord with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC; evaluated the prospects for justice in the paramilitary process; and discussed the role of third-party actors—including churches, civil society, and the international community—in each of these processes.

The conference organizers—senior program officer **Ginny Bouvier** and senior fellow **Jennifer Schirmer**, with the assistance of research assistant Brian White—asked how these disparate peace efforts might best be pur-

sued, whether lessons learned from one peace negotiation might be useful for another in the midst of this war, and how international actors and Colombian civil society might use these efforts as the foundation to build a sustainable peace.

The internal armed conflict in Colombia has resisted resolution for nearly half a century. For many, the war seems intractable. Its resolution is complicated by the need to deal not just with one insurgent group but with multiple illegal armed groups. These groups vary tremendously among themselves and by region, and they have changed over time as drug trafficking has pervaded the conflict, providing the financial underpinnings for its persistence and complicating its resolution.

Both events began with a focus on the ELN and FARC peace initiatives. Since the early 1980s, Colombian governments have alternated between strategies of war and strategies of peace in their dealings with illegal armed guerrilla organizations. They have used distinct and separate processes to deal with each of the major armed groups—sometimes seeking to disarm one sector while concurrently heightening military engagement with another.

The Colombian government has employed distinct processes to deal with each group of illegal armed actors and has managed over the past two decades to demobilize many of them. When

The internal armed conflict in Colombia has resisted resolution for nearly half a century.

Colombian President **Alvaro Uribe** took office in 2002, only three major illegal armed groups remained: the paramilitary Auto-defensas Unidas de Colombia (Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, or AUC), the FARC, and the ELN.

During his first term (2002–06), Uribe invested tremendous political capital in a controversial proposal to demobilize the right-wing AUC forces. Following the demobilization of more than 30,000 combatants, **Luis Carlos Restrepo**, Colombia’s high commissioner for peace, announced in April 2006 that the largest demobilization in the history of Colombia had been successful and the AUC was officially disbanded.

Colombia faces the emergence of new criminal groups and other serious problems, but the process of reintegrating the paramilitary has been primarily responsible for shifting the political landscape in the country. Confessions of former combatants and investigations by courageous journalists, human rights workers, and legal professionals have led to the discovery of more than 500 mass graves of victims of paramilitary crimes and the public exposure of extensive links between these crimes and political elites close to Uribe. Recent revelations have exposed wiretapping operations by the police against opposition politicians, government officials, and journalists, as well as the fact that imprisoned paramili-



The Institute’s Ginny Bouvier moderated a discussion on national peace initiatives in Colombia featuring, among other speakers, Alberto Lara, a consultant with the UNDP Justice Program.

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The Institute's work spans the world. From Nigeria and Sudan to Iraq, North Korea, and Turkey, Institute staff are working to defuse crises, reduce conflict, and help set countries on the path to post-conflict stability. This work, often conducted in dangerous conditions far from Washington, D.C., fulfills part of the Institute's mandate to engage directly in peacemaking efforts in zones of conflict abroad. Presented below are summaries of a few of the Institute's recent initiatives.

Learning about Conflict, from a Distance

The Institute's Online Training program applies the latest advances in media and technology to bring relevant training to the widest possible community of practitioners. The Institute offers courses in peace studies to anyone with access to the Web at no cost. Its online course on conflict analysis presents an introduction to the subject, illustrating analytical tools used by practitioners with reference to two extended case studies, the conflict in Kosovo and the genocide in Rwanda.

Three more online courses will be available soon: Conflict Resolution, Mediation, and Religious and Interfaith Dialogue.

A reflection of the Institute's long-standing commitment to innovation, Professional Training Online has won praise from participants around the world.

"I find that your distance learning model is the most professional and relevant I have come across. In particular, your use of clear analytic frameworks adopted from evidence-based research to provide policy-relevant and practitioner-useful approaches to understanding conflict is most compelling."

— **Vincenzo Bollettino**, Project Coordinator, Distance Learning Initiative, Harvard Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research

"I'm serious in saying that yours was the best distance learning program I've ever taken. The audio clips by people who lived the crises provided a perspective that mere reading cannot convey."

— **Daniel C. Clark**, Business Development Manager, Northrop Grumman, former U.S. Central Command Staff

"I was pleased with how well-written the modules were and thought the two analytical tools presented give a good construct for thinking about conflict and how to focus response planning. Thanks for making the course available online, and I do plan to recommend it to others."

— **Colonel Joe L. Hogler**, The Joint Staff

Northern Uganda: Peace on the Horizon?

USIP Senior Fellow **Betty Bigombe** is one of the lead negotiators in the 20-year conflict between the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel movement in the north of the country. She has worked on the conflict since 1988, first as the top Ugandan government negotiator, and now in an independent capacity. One of her chief accomplishments has been to persuade northern Uganda's Acholi communities to accept former LRA child soldiers back into society. Recently, USIP sent a film crew led by **Lauren Sucher** to record Bigombe in action. The resulting USIP Video Report, which is available on the Institute's website, follows Bigombe during four weeks in early 2007 working in northern Uganda in an effort to urge the LRA rebels back to the negotiating table.

Bigombe also spoke in June on Capitol Hill about the brightening prospects for peace in northern Uganda. She shared the podium with Academy Award-nominated actor **Ryan Gosling**, West Wing actress **Melissa Fitzgerald**, author **Jimmie Briggs**, and several other Africa activists.

Bigombe noted that while some progress has been made in Uganda—with a recently renewed cessation of hostilities agreement and an agreed upon roadmap for comprehensive solutions to the conflict—the situation remains fragile. She emphasized that success will require leadership from the international community, especially the United States. 🌍



Senior fellow Betty Bigombe testified before Congress on Uganda's future with Academy Award-nominated actor Ryan Gosling.

Bigombe noted that while some progress has been made in Uganda the situation remains fragile.



Developing a Peace Education Curriculum with Pakistan's Madrasas

In May, **Qamar-ul Huda**, a senior program officer in the Religion and Peacemaking program, gave a five-day symposium on peace education training to religious scholars and madrasa educators in Islamabad, Pakistan. The training was done in conjunction with **Azhar Hussain** of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy. Huda, who is bilingual in Urdu, said the experience was difficult but ultimately



Pakistani children study the Quran at the Madrasa Anwar-ul-Uloom Taleemul Al-Quran religious school in Karachi, Pakistan. The Institute's Qamar-ul Huda works with the leaders of Pakistan's religious schools, or madrasas, to develop curricula promoting peace and tolerance.

rewarding on many levels. "You go in there with a clear idea of what you're going to bring to the workshop and how the lectures will lead to a certain discussion, but the participants end up teaching you so much more," he said.

Despite the concerns that emerged about madrasas among U.S. policymakers in the aftermath of 9/11, most madrasa leaders feel isolated, exploited, and under pressure, said Huda. "There's a lot of lip service paid to them, but they feel that no one is asking them what they want, nor is there an appreciation of the education they are providing to Pakistani citizens," Huda said. "The result is that they are still very suspicious of domestic critics and of outsiders who are quick to propose reforming their institutions."

Most madrasa leaders feel isolated, exploited, and under pressure.

Huda has also hosted several distinguished madrasa leaders at conferences held in Washington, D.C. In February, **Qazi Abdul Qadeer Khamosh**, a prominent Wahhabi leader and Chairman of Muslim Christian Federation International, and **Hafiz Khalil Ahmed**, an influential Deobandi madrasa leader, described their efforts to promote peace and tolerance in Pakistani madrasas and faith-based reconciliation as a path to peace. And in late June, Huda hosted several of Pakistan's top religious leaders at a seminar devoted to reforming that country's educational system. 🌐

Nepal in Transition: Strengthening Security and the Rule of Law

The Institute's **Colette Rausch** recently held dialogue sessions in two communities in Nepal that are either currently experiencing violence or are at risk of violence: Nepalgunj and Lahan, in the mid-west and eastern Terai regions, respectively. The sessions brought together the Nepal Police and civil society leaders, including human rights defenders, media, and members of the development and legal communities. Representatives of political parties also attended the sessions. The aim was to identify those areas of mutual concern, as well as to identify possible steps to strengthen security and the rule of law. The sessions were structured to develop collaborative approaches to conflict prevention and conflict resolu-

Rausch's sessions are part of a larger USIP project aimed at establishing communication links between Nepal's civil society, the police, and the political parties.

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Too Young to Fight, Too Young to Die

USIP Special Event Focuses on Child Soldiers

Young soldiers from a Ugandan-supported Congolese rebel movement group sing liberation songs while waving their rifles in this 2002 photo in the northeastern Congolese town of Bunia. The United Nations estimates that more than 300,000 children under the age of 18 are currently fighting worldwide, mostly with rebel groups.

Some 300,000 children are involved in armed conflicts around the world—as soldiers, but also as cooks, porters, sex slaves, spies, and decoys. Their lives, so far removed from the ideal of a carefree childhood, have recently generated heightened attention, via a surge of new books and documentaries. The Institute held a seminar in May to chronicle the stories of individual child soldiers and address the challenges of reintegrating them into their societies.

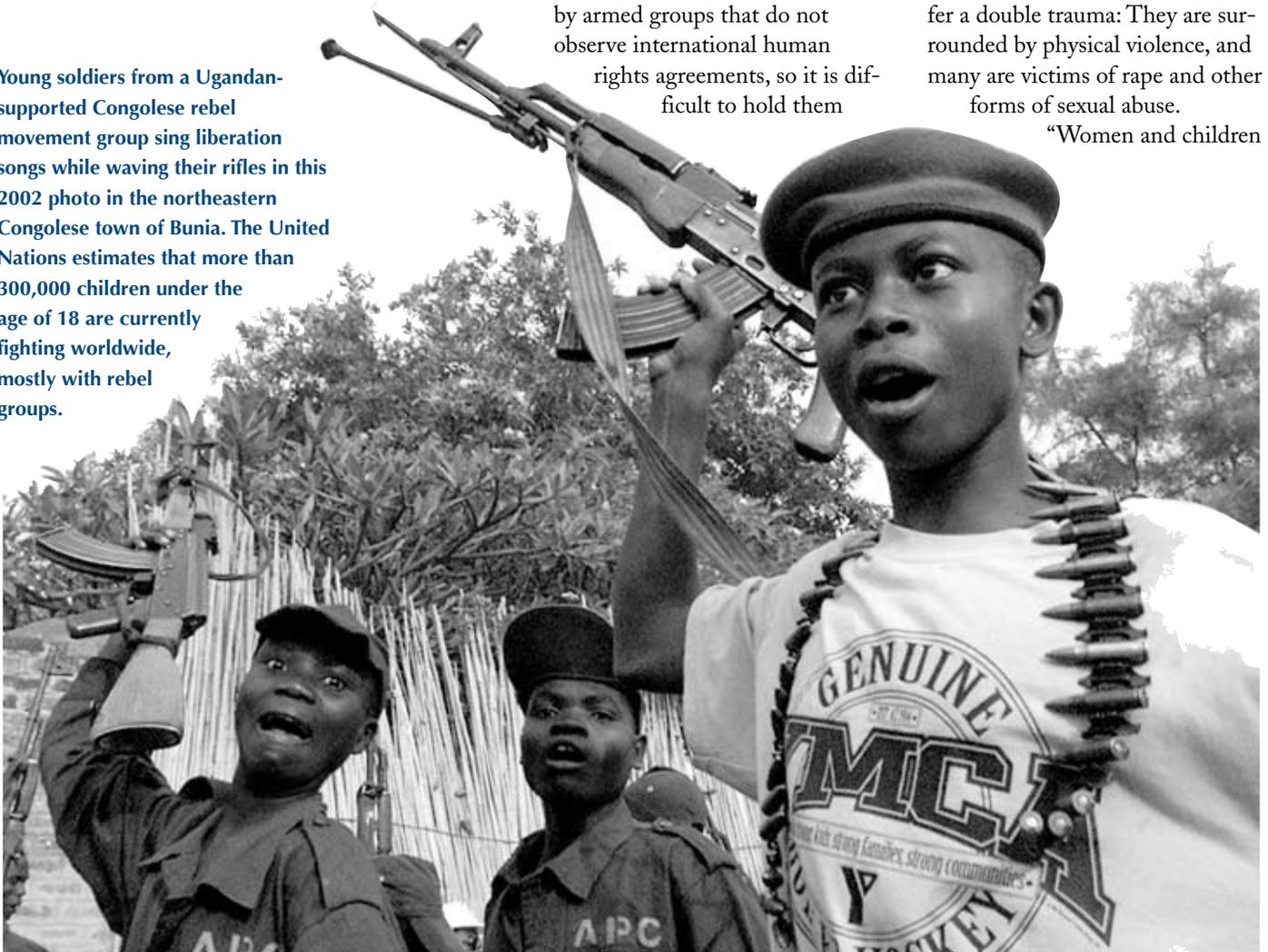
Institute senior fellow **Betty Bigombe**, a twenty-year veteran of mediation efforts between the Ugandan government and the Lord’s Resistance Army, opened the seminar by observing that the issue of child soldiers has picked up momentum among human rights and development groups. Unfortunately, a number of false assumptions impede a clear understanding of the problem. Most child soldiers are recruited by armed groups that do not observe international human

rights agreements, so it is difficult to hold them

accountable. Many are girls and young women, who face special problems with reintegration. Communities often view the children who return with suspicion, and the children themselves may be reluctant to relinquish the power and status they achieved as soldiers.

Speaking at the seminar, **Jimmy Briggs**, author of *Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers Go to War*, noted that children often suffer a double trauma: They are surrounded by physical violence, and many are victims of rape and other forms of sexual abuse.

“Women and children





are the first victims of war,” Briggs said. AIDS is a huge problem. “More than 60 percent of combatants in Africa have HIV, and most sexual slaves get infected,” he said. In eastern Congo, as many as 300,000 women have been raped, and injuries are common. Briggs read selections from his book about two children, Gueso of Colombia and Eugenie of Rwanda, both of whom have died since he interviewed them. Their tragic stories illustrate the true human costs of this phenomenon.

Two scholars and practitioners at the seminar discussed recent research and shed new light on the nature of the problem. **Michael Wessels** of Columbia University and the Christian Children’s Fund said that too much emphasis is placed on the children’s assumed psychosocial deficits. In fact, the children have extraordinary coping and adaptation mechanisms, and posttraumatic stress is often less of a factor than is commonly assumed.

“We’ve done a lousy job of listening to people,” Wessels said. “We need to bring forward the voices, the diversity of experiences of children in war.”

Rather than focusing on the children’s past, projects aimed at



Betty Bigombe is a senior fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace and an important mediator between the Ugandan government and the Lord’s Resistance Army.

reintegrating child soldiers into the community should focus on their present and future needs. “The tensions of current living outweigh the stresses of the past,” Wessels said. Defining new social roles, regaining the acceptance of the community, and finding a way to make a living are the primary challenges facing former child soldiers. “Feelings of being isolated, rejected, and stigmatized are the source of psychosocial problems, not trauma,” he said.

Chris Blattman, a Yale professor and lead author of one of the first extensive surveys of former child soldiers, decried the stereotypical view of child combatants as “walking ghosts” and “damaged, uneducated pariahs,” to quote from recent news articles. “Traumatization is not the norm,” Blattman said. The Survey of War-Affected Youth in Uganda, which he co-directs, has found that economic intervention is the key. “Child soldiers are less educated because of the years they’ve missed school, and as a result they have lower

skills and fewer economic prospects.”

On a host of psychosocial measures, former child soldiers fare no worse than other children, Blattman continued. “They do not have a greater propensity to fight, nor do they commit spousal abuse more frequently than others.” Child soldiers experience a slightly higher number of symptoms for posttraumatic stress disorder than the norm, but that may be an artifact of the small number of children who are deeply traumatized, he said.

Both Blattman and Wessels emphasized the importance of engaging the community in the reintegration project. Ceremonies of forgiveness and reconciliation can be critical. “The restoration of the social fabric, of family and community networks,” is essential, Wessels said. As Bigombe observed, it is no use to provide vocational training to young people—as mechanics or tailors, for example—if the community will shun their businesses. 🌐

Children have extraordinary coping and adaptation mechanisms.



Jimmy Briggs, author of *Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers Go to War*.

In eastern Congo, as many as 300,000 women have been raped, and traumatic injuries are common.



Letters from Baghdad

By **Rusty Barber**

The Institute's Iraq programs aim to reduce interethnic and interreligious violence, speed up stabilization and democratization, and reduce the need for a U.S. presence in Iraq. As part of this initiative, the Institute has maintained a small office in the Green Zone in Baghdad since early 2004. **Rusty Barber**, a former political officer in the U.S. Foreign Service, has run the office since March 2007. His weekly dispatches have provided a lively and sobering insider's view of the promise and peril facing U.S. efforts in that country.

March 27, 2007

Initial Impressions

Though I have existed in this tiny circle of Baghdad for barely ninety-six hours, there are an overwhelming number of sights, sounds, and smells to take in: massive slabs of reinforced concrete that have turned the IZ [International Zone] into a virtual ant farm, the clatter of weapons on tile as soldiers lay them down to eat in the mess, the pervasive friendliness, the occasional thump of an incoming rocket and, more rarely, the desk-rattling car bomb belatedly followed by the "Big Voice" alerting residents to the presence of danger:

**LOCKDOWN!
LOCKDOWN!
LOCKDOWN! UNIFORM
POSTURE U3**

**ATTENTION ON THE
COMPOUND!
ATTENTION ON THE
COMPOUND!**

**LOCKDOWN!
LOCKDOWN!
LOCKDOWN!**

**NO OUTSIDE
MOVEMENT UNLESS
MISSION CRITICAL.**

**UNIFORM POSTURE IS
U3 UNTIL FURTHER
NOTICE.**

**LOCKDOWN WILL
REMAIN IN EFFECT UNTIL
LIFTED BY G-3.**

"We have our own little aviary filled with brightly colored (and rapidly multiplying) budgies."

We clamber onto the roof to try to identify the location of the blast. A plume of smoke not far beyond one of the IZ entry points provides the answer. That plume means one of our Iraqi staff will not make it in for the meeting that day. He will instead spend the afternoon in lockdown as his neighborhood is cordoned off and searched. Almost everyone else makes it in, however, smiling, welcoming—curious about the new face they will have to get used to for the next twelve months. One is immediately struck by the time, effort, and courage it takes each of them to make it through the heavily guarded—and dangerously jumpy—checkpoints to get to our office.

We have our own little aviary filled with brightly colored (and rapidly multiplying) budgies that the military guys next door established in the courtyard. It's comforting to hear their joyful chatter in the mornings.

April 2, 2007

Rocket Attacks

Beautiful weather this week in Baghdad—a benign prelude to the onslaught of summer heat that lies in wait somewhere after April 15, during which temperatures can soar to as high as 140 degrees Fahrenheit.

The arrival of Ambassador **[Ryan] Crocker** was a sober affair, owing to a week of rocket attacks that forced IZ residents to sport their vests and helmets. One of



A cage full of budgies flanks the Institute's Iraq bunker, their song providing a pleasing contrast to the sounds of war.

those rockets took the lives of two U.S. citizens, a soldier and a civilian. Services were held for them at a small, makeshift chapel that sits beside the embassy, sheltered in a cocoon of concrete. The chapel is the locus of some outstanding live gospel music on occasion.

For Iraqis, the toll was considerably higher, following suicide bombings in the markets of Al Shaab and Sadr City that took the lives of more than eighty people.

The rockets have stopped for the time being; the budgies have not. A new, bigger aviary is envisioned for them soon.

April 8, 2007

Getting Exercise

It has been a very busy week here in Baghdad. We are forging ahead with our effort to bring our conflict management training down to the district level in Baghdad, with strong interest coming from Mansour, Rashid, and—just today—Karradah districts.

On a personal level, I have spent much time meeting my counterparts based here, looking for people and organizations to partner with in order to magnify USIP's efforts in Iraq. I have also managed to find an Ultimate Frisbee group that plays occasionally in a dust bowl next to Saddam's former bunker. The field lies just under the flight path for incoming helicopters ferrying in wounded from the field. The rotor wash kicks up so much dust that we're usually black by the end of the game. Still, a good way to get exercise, for which I'm grateful.

April 24, 2007

The Surge

The surge continues apace with, at best, uneven results so far. I spoke to a young soldier the other day, relaxing on top of his Humvee after returning from patrols in the Doura section of southeast Baghdad. He commented that the area—which has seen a significant amount of insurgent activity—is showing signs of calming down, with residents beginning to respond positively to the increased patrols. “It’s still pretty hot down there, though,” he allowed, ruefully suggesting that I “drop in” sometime.

Tomorrow I will make my first foray beyond the walls of the IZ into Baghdad proper to observe one of our more important conflict management training events. This is not a trip I intend to make often, but I feel it is necessary under certain conditions to credibly understand, represent, and advance the goals of USIP's peace-building mission in Iraq.

April 30, 2007

A Trip beyond the Green Zone

Not surprisingly, last Wednesday's training in the Karradah district of Baghdad was the highlight of my week. The fifteen-minute drive from the IZ over the 14th of July Bridge that spans the Tigris is short but intense. My PSD [personal security detail] largely consisted of Australian former Special Forces and one Dane.

My brief journey yielded the anticipated images of decayed infrastructure, blocked-off neighborhood streets, Iraqi military vehicles with mounted guns at intersections, and a great deal of uncollected garbage. At the same time, residents were moving about their business in significant numbers, stopping to gaze with little noticeable emotion as our small convoy careened past. I noted with regret the look of dejected resignation on the faces of drivers pulled to the side by police as we passed.

The purpose of my trip was to observe a joint conflict management seminar for two Baghdad districts, one Shia, the other largely Sunni. Both districts have experienced intensive intra and inter-communal violence. One thing that leaders from both communities I spoke to emphasized over and over: ordinary Sunni and Shia are not predisposed by either recent or past history to despise and fight one another. Rather, the violent ideologies of a few—and the proliferating physical barriers intended to protect ordinary citizens from them—threaten to make this a self-fulfilling reality. There remain both opportunity and hope that this need not be the endgame.

“Ordinary Sunni and Shia are not predisposed by either recent or past history to despise and fight one another.”

May 7, 2007

Getting Credit

The blanket of heat that descends on Iraq in the summer has slowly begun to drape itself on Baghdad. As the mercury rises, so will the load increase on the city's power grid, as residents and offices try to fend off the heat with air-conditioning units. With power still patchy, it is certain that demand will outstrip supply.

Invited by the colonel in charge of reconstruction of Baghdad's central district to a meeting with the leader of one of the new embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), I was struck by the challenges faced by the Corps of Engineers and its contractors in building and maintaining these projects.

One problem the colonel listed is the fact that when the Iraqi army is asked to protect a site, they frequently move in, cause great damage, and then make off with fixtures on their way out. She also noted that certain party-affiliated groups often take credit for a new facility, boosting their profile in a given neighborhood. A recent inspection of a health clinic in Sadr City, for example, yielded a

*See **Baghdad**, page 14*



The Institute's chief of party in Iraq is Rusty Barber, shown here preparing for a trip outside the Green Zone with bodyguards.

“One mortar attack exploded just outside, sending shrapnel through the large picture window behind the desk.”



The Helter-Skelter Nation

A Conversation with Senior Fellow Rotimi Suberu

Rotimi Suberu is currently in his second tour of duty as a Jennings Randolph senior fellow at the Institute. The Nigerian political scientist first spent a fellowship year at the Institute more than a decade ago, in 1993–94. At that time, his country was teetering on the brink of anarchy, as one kleptocratic government was overthrown by another, even more brutal one. The book Suberu wrote that year, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, demonstrated how Nigeria's unique federal system helps stitch the oil-rich country together even as it deepens the institutional flaws that keep most Nigerians impoverished. As one reviewer noted, Suberu's book "gives the impression that Africa's most populous nation is not unlike a clattering jalopy. Held together by proverbial duct-tape and bubble gum, its occupants labor to steer while struggling to keep the doors on."

A lot has happened in Nigeria since Suberu's last fellowship, but the country remains chaotic, deeply corrupt, and beset by ethnic, regional, and religious rivalries—and yet also dynamic, lively, and full of potential. PeaceWatch spoke with Suberu in late June about Nigeria's current dilemmas and future prospects.

PW: After many years of military rule, Nigeria reverted to democratic civilian leadership in 1999 with the election of **Olusegun Obasanjo**. He recently ceded power to another civilian, but only after a thwarted attempt to retain power and in an election that most observers feel was deeply flawed. How do you assess Obasanjo's legacy?

Suberu: His legacy is deeply conflicted. On the positive side, he implemented critical economic reforms, put the country's finances in order, paid off or had written off the Paris Club external debt, made the budgetary process more transparent, and initiated some anticorruption measures. He oversaw a substantial increase in the country's rate of growth—from 3 to 7 percent a year. His response to the effort by numerous Muslim-majority states to institute Sharia law was mature and sensible. He helped contain the problem and slowly allowed it to subside. Most important, he sustained civilian rule through eight turbulent years, riding a storm of ethnic and religious conflicts.

On the negative side, he failed to resolve the underlying problems: the culture of corruption and impunity, the ethnic/religious/regional tensions. He improved the country's macroeconomic structures, but ordinary Nigerians saw few if any "dividends of democracy"—no better services, no better infrastructure. The job market remained bleak; there was little poverty reduction; the electricity could remain off for

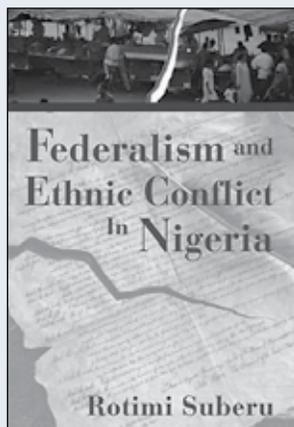


Rotimi Suberu, Jennings Randolph senior fellow at USIP

weeks at a time, even in middle-class neighborhoods. Most disappointing was his attempt to amend the Nigerian Constitution so that he could run for a third term. He set up an office in the State Building where his supporters organized the campaign and bribed legislators. Then, when he didn't get his way, he oversaw a scandalous maladministration and manipulation of the election to ensure the victory of his hand-picked successor, **Umaru Yar'Adua**. That was his worst act, because it undermined the legitimacy of democracy and diminished Nigeria in the eyes of the world.

PW: Why has corruption been such a dominant feature of Nigeria's political landscape?

Suberu: In Nigeria you have a whole array of people dependent on the government for their power, their livelihood, their wealth. If you lose power—or if the "big man" you support loses power—you lose your access to all of these things. There is little in the way of a private sector



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"This election was stolen not only from above but also from below."



to fall back on. Obasanjo didn't just decide on his own that he wanted a third term; all his supporters and dependents put tremendous pressure on him to run again.

Nigeria's infamous "godfathers" are the pillars of this system. They are the ones who have the financial resources to sponsor candidates. Once their "godsons" win the elections, they control the political appointments, steer contracts their way, and siphon off the state's revenue. For them, politics is a form of investment. Every once in a while, there will be a rupture between the godfathers and the godsons, and then you see outbreaks of violence, intimidation, and electoral chicanery.

PW: So why did Obasanjo and Yar'Adua's party, the People's Democratic Party, steal an election that most observers believe Yar'Adua would have won anyway?

Suberu: You have to understand the logic of the system. Local leaders wanted to deliver their constituencies to the candidates they thought were likely to win the election. By delivering their constituencies, even through massive vote rigging, they put themselves in a position to bargain for government patronage. Sometimes, for example, voting materials were never delivered to the precincts, yet the official results showed one-sided support for one of the candidates. This election was stolen not only from above but also from below.

PW: At first, it seemed as if the Nigerian people were not going to accept the results of the election. Now it seems as though they might. Why has the level of opposition quieted down?

Suberu: There are three answers. First, in a number of places, there were pockets of electoral credibility.

In eight or nine states and in the biggest cities of Kano and Lagos, opposition parties won election to governorship positions—so they too have a stake in the system. Second, people feel that in spite of all the vote rigging, Yar'Adua would have won the election anyway. And many feel that he is not necessarily a bad choice for the presidency. He has a reputation for being relatively free of corruption. He is not from the military. And he is the first Nigerian president to have a university degree. Third, Nigerians are hopeful that the judiciary will resolve some of the electoral problems. The judiciary has shown increasing independence in recent years, as I discuss in the book I am currently writing.

That said, Yar'Adua faces extraordinary challenges ahead. The country is [as of early July] in the midst of a strike that has paralyzed the economy. The trade unions launched the strike to protest a rise in the value-added taxes and a cut in the subsidy for gas prices. It is the first big test for the government. Beyond that, many of the challenges remain from the Obasanjo era. We face the conflict in the Niger Delta, Nigeria's main oil-producing region, where discontent is growing because the people of the region feel they are not getting a fair share of the oil revenues. In various places, there is conflict between the "indigenes" and "non-indigenes"—that is, those whose parents immigrated to the region, whose roots in the area don't go back generations. The control of the police, which is a highly centralized, national force. The contest over states' rights. The allocation of offshore resources revenue.

PW: So what is the future likely to hold?

Suberu: Nigeria is really at a crossroads. I see three possibilities. First, there could be an implosion

of democracy, a military coup. Second, there could be a period of continued stagnation, as the government becomes increasingly disconnected from the needs of the people. Third, we could begin to see some real reform, with better delivery of services, greater transparency, electoral accountability. I hope for the third, but I fear the first. Some observers—Nigerians and outsiders—hold out some hope for the military. They hope the military will come in, mop up, and return the country to democratic rule. I think those hopes are misguided. If the military comes in, they will entrench themselves, and corruption and political violence will return with a vengeance. I agree with one of Nigeria's great leaders, Obafemi Awolowo, who was fond of saying that the worst form of civilian government is better than the best form of military rule.

The most likely scenario is for continuing stagnation. But the system is inherently unstable and creates a sense of permanent chaos. It is under greater challenge than ever before from the Nigerian press, non-governmental organizations, academics, and an increasingly assertive judiciary. They are the hope for the future. 🌐

"In Nigeria you have a whole array of people dependent on the government for their power, their livelihood, their wealth."

Below: Nigeria's new president, Umaru Yar'Adua, 56, waves to supporters after he was sworn in in Abuja, Nigeria, Tuesday, May 29, 2007.





Future Peacemakers

continued from page 2

Wendy Cai volunteers in the fight against cancer by organizing the annual luminaria ceremony which honors the memory of loved ones and celebrates the courage of survivors. Matthias Nikaj works with African refugees in San Diego. Other winners tutor children in reading and math. **Albert Wang**, a junior at Gilman School in Baltimore, Maryland, organized a fundraising campaign for the Darfur genocide. 🌍

Outreach

continued from page 3

lenges to community college faculty and administrators to stay current with a rapidly changing world, develop a deeper understanding of the nature and consequences of the transformations, and find effective ways of making these issues relevant and interesting to students and in the communities in which they live.

“Community college faculty are often the ones educating the next generation of activists and organizers, and they are very much a part of their local communities,” he said. “They bring an energy and excitement that make for dynamic discussions, and they are eager to learn about the latest research in peace and conflict studies.” 🌍

Smock

continued from page 4

the Rumi Foundation, an organization dedicated to fostering interfaith and intercultural dialogue and providing a platform for education and information exchange. Smock was recognized for his “great contributions to the world’s communities through...dedicated efforts toward global peace.” Other honorees included the prime minister of Turkey, the president of Spain, and

the president of Georgetown University.

In addition to being vice president of the Institute’s Center for Mediation and Conflict Resolution, Smock is the associate vice president of the Religion and Peacemaking program, one of the Institute’s Centers of Innovation. Previously, he was director of the Institute’s grant program and coordinator of Africa activities. He has worked on African issues for more than thirty years and lived in Africa for eleven years. He received a Ph. D. in anthropology from Cornell University and a Master of Divinity degree from New York Theological Seminary. 🌍

Colombia

continued from page 5

taries continue to conduct their drug-trafficking operations by cell phone. The fallout from these scandals has led to the forced resignation of twelve generals and severely strained Colombian democracy, as an already overloaded judicial system seeks to uphold the rule of law.

Support for political approaches to dealing with the remaining armed groups is growing, according to recent Gallup polls. In an April 2, 2007 poll in Colombia, 79 percent of those surveyed favored talks with the ELN, compared with 18 percent who opposed such talks. A similar percentage favored talks with the pro-government paramilitaries. In an April 2003 Gallup poll, support for negotiating with the antigovernment guerrillas was 39 percent; currently, 64 percent of those polled support a negotiated solution over a military solution.

“Peace is the number one imperative for Colombia,” said Congressman **James McGovern** (D-MA), who opened the Hill event. “Peacemaking is a neglected topic inside and outside of Colombia,” he noted, adding that “too much time, effort, and resources are focused on mili-

tary solutions.” McGovern was speaking not only of the various armed conflicts—the paramilitaries, the FARC, and the ELN—that prevail in Colombia but also of the tactics regarding the cultivation of illegal crops, such as field eradication, forcibly displacing the civilian populations of conflict zones, and making intractable demands in negotiations so that continued armed conflict is the only option left on the table. He noted that a great deal of political will is needed in Colombia, the United States, and the international community to change this dynamic. 🌍

“Peace is the number one imperative for Colombia.”

—Congressman James

Baghdad

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large portrait of Moqtadr al Sadr in the entranceway, implying that customers had his organization to thank for its existence.

May 13, 2007

Baghdad Violence

We regret the tardiness of this week’s Weekly Report, but the lack of available electricity (down to as little as an hour a day this past week) has hampered the ability of our program specialists to submit their reports via Internet.

The violence that continues to reign in Baghdad has put a particular strain on our Baghdad staff and their families this week. A cousin of S— [a Baghdad staffer] was assassinated in Mansour district, leaving behind a wife and four children. Six relatives of A— [another Baghdad staffer] and their driver were kidnapped in Diyala province while driving north to Dohuk from Baghdad. This stretch of road is well known for the crim-



inal gangs that operate temporary “checkpoints” along them. The kidnapers have demanded ransom in the amount of \$10,000 each for the safe return of the hostages. A— and his relatives are now engaged in trying to raise the required funds while negotiating with the kidnapers to refrain from harming their loved ones.

These incidents, lifted off the pages of the daily news reports we all read, are increasingly touching the lives of our Iraqi staff members, a measure of how universal their impact has become in Baghdad and throughout Iraq.

May 20, 2007

Narrow Escapes

There are two major events of the last week to report. The first, and most important, is that A—’s family members were released by their abductors, who took them at a checkpoint along the northern road from Baghdad. His family paid a heavy ransom, but all are now safely back in Baghdad. Their kidnapers informed them that had the captives been Shia, instead of Christian, they would have been killed regardless of payment. Such are the perversely drawn distinctions of the criminal-extremist element that has made violence against civilians a justifiable occupation. We are all greatly relieved on behalf of A— and his loved ones.

The other big event since our last report is the direct fire mortar attack on our compound last Wednesday. Of the thirteen hits sustained that day in the IZ, five landed in our compound. One exploded just outside, sending shrapnel through the large picture window behind the desk. Mercifully, the only immediate casualties—in addition to the window—were a standing closet, the sink, a small fridge, and a mattress that had the misfortune to be stashed against a corner of the window. My monitor is embedded with tiny bits

of glass and glistens when the light hits it in the early morning. I was in the office at the time but managed to move away from the window and into a galleyway after the first direct hit. (The budgies’ aviary is on the far side of our building; the birds survived unscathed.)

As sobering as this event was, it is even more sobering to remind oneself that for Baghdad’s residents—our staff included—calamities like these, and worse, are so common as to be routine aspects of existence.

May 27, 2007

Power

To be a resident of Baghdad these days means you are receiving about one hour of electrical power per twenty-four-hour period from the national grid. You supplement that meager ration by purchasing power from a neighborhood generator. If you are a USIP staff member, you have a small nine-amp generator that permits you to run one appliance. Between these three sources, you can cobble together approximately seven hours of power per day. However, since you never know exactly when the national grid power will flow, you have to be prepared to get up several times during the night to alternate your power source so you don’t waste power by overlapping. Many people keep a light bulb permanently switched on to inform them when power is flowing from the national grid.

In times past, Iraqis sought relief from the swelter of their apartments by sleeping outside on roofs and terraces; however, the escalating violence and gunfire have forced them to abandon this practice.

Between trying to avoid ending up casualties of the violence and struggling to keep the stove, refrigerator, and other essential appliances functioning, it’s no wonder Baghdad residents look exhausted so much of the time. ☺

—Rusty

On the Ground

continued from page 7



The Institute’s Colette Rausch is coordinating an ongoing series of conferences in Nepal bringing together civil society, police, and politicians to discuss issues of common concern.

tion and to decrease the risk of communal violence by increasing mutual trust and improving local capacity to effectively deal with security issues.

Rausch’s sessions served as a follow-on program to one that was held in February 2007 in Kathmandu, and part of a larger USIP project aimed at establishing communication links between Nepal’s civil society, the police, and the political parties. The Institute is planning to hold four additional local-level dialogues, with the first taking place in the far-western region of Nepal in early July. ☺

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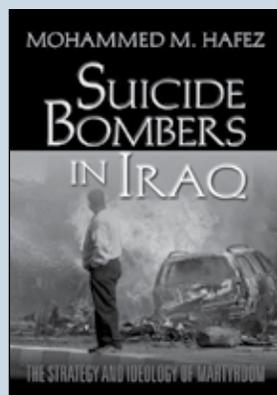
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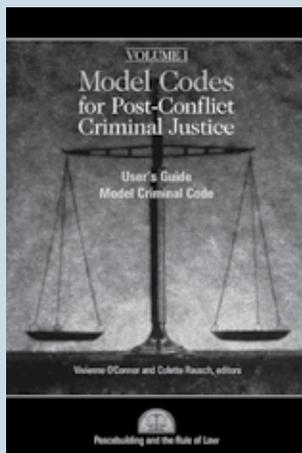
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