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Gasoline Prices Are Forecast To Keep Rising

By Walid Al-Saqaf and Thaddeus Herrick
Staff Reporters of The Wall Street Journal
April 8, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Gasoline prices will keep rising in coming weeks and will average \$2.28 a gallon for the summer, a 20% increase over a year ago, according to the latest government forecast.

A big reason for higher prices is persistent strong demand despite the rising costs of filling up. "The main factor behind the rise in gasoline prices is the increasing domestic consumption over the global increase in crude-oil prices," said Guy Caruso, administrator of the Energy Information Administration, which released the report yesterday.

The EIA report also highlighted various supply factors likely to keep prices elevated for a long time. For one, the level of spare crude-production capacity, already thin, is expected to fall further through next year. In addition, there is a lack of U.S. refining capacity, with refiners unable to substantially increase their supplies of products such as gasoline, jet fuel and heating oil, even as demand grows with the proliferation of gas-guzzling vehicles.

The International Monetary Fund, in a separate report released yesterday, warned that those trends could crimp growth world-wide. "The oil market will remain tight in the coming years and high and volatile oil prices will continue to present a serious risk to the global economy," the IMF's annual World Economic Outlook said. The report focused on the long-term oil outlook, saying that demand will increase globally, potentially raising prices to unprecedented levels.

The EIA, the statistics arm of the Department of Energy, said U.S. gas prices will hit a peak of \$2.35 a gallon in May, up from \$2.22 at the beginning of this week. Mr. Caruso said he is expecting demand to increase 1.8% over a year ago, and that "is above the average growth of the last five years."

As for production, Mr. Caruso said that "world oil spare capacity got extremely low in 2004, and we see that tightening further in 2006." Specifically, the EIA estimates that the amount of unused capacity that oil producers can bring on line will fall below one million barrels a day next year. That is just 1% of world demand and leaves the economy vulnerable in the event of a big supply disruption.

At the same time, refining capacity is down about 10% to 16.8 million barrels a day from a high of 18.6 million barrels a day in 1981, according to the National Petroleum Refiners Association.

Refiners have been reluctant to invest in new plants for a variety of reasons, including historically low returns and stricter environmental regulations. But refiners also have sought to keep their inventories low and, with the help of new technology, have reduced their inventories considerably over the past 10 years, according to the EIA. Another factor facing the industry: Many refineries are ill-equipped to process heavy, high-sulfur crude, which is usually more readily available than the more expensive light, sweet crude.

The upshot: A refining system increasingly unable to respond to market forces. The same is true internationally, creating a tighter market for gasoline imports. According to the New York-based Petroleum Industry Research Foundation, global oil demand grew by 4.6 million barrels a day in 2003 and 2004. Meanwhile, net additions to refining capacity were less than 700,000 barrels a day.

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Global Growth to Slow Amid High Oil Prices

By Walid Al-Saqaf

Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal

April 13, 2005 12:59 p.m.

WASHINGTON -- The global economy will grow at a slower but solid pace in 2005, with higher energy prices paring expansion, the International Monetary Fund said Wednesday.

The IMF once again predicted uneven growth, with strong results by the U.S. and China, but sluggish performances in Europe and Japan.

In its latest World Economic Outlook, the IMF forecast overall growth at 4.3% this year, down from 5.1% in 2004. It projected the U.S. economy would grow 3.6%, down from 4.4% in 2004, but a bit better than the 3.5% rate it forecast in September. The IMF said it "welcomed the continued strong performance of the U.S. economy. With most forward-looking indicators remaining solid, the expansion is set to continue in 2005."

The report said China's economic momentum remains vigorous, with investment at levels that can't be sustained over the long run. It projected China's economy would grow 8.5% this year and 8% next year, down somewhat from the torrid 9.5% pace in 2004. But the IMF also doesn't rule out the possibility of stronger-than-expected growth for China in 2005, particularly if Chinese investments aim more at increasing quality than quantity.

The IMF expressed concern that growth is hardly uniform, with Europe and Japan lagging behind. The imbalance, the IMF said, has widened further over the past year, increasing "the risk of abrupt movements in exchange rates." A sharp increase in oil prices and a significant tightening of financial markets could significantly slow global growth.

The IMF said that, "with investors now willing to hold larger shares of foreign assets in their portfolios," globalization may have contributed to the persistence of current-account imbalances, and "provided policy makers with the option of more gradual adjustment."

The report said developed countries' budget deficits and volatile oil prices both posed risks to global growth. It urged developed countries to cut their budget deficits, and noted that the U.S. budget deficit "is now the largest among the major advanced economies, with the exception of Japan."

As for oil, it predicted the market will remain tight for the foreseeable future, as demand continues to rise and oil production outside of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries peaks. The IMF suggested a four-pronged approach to promote stability in oil markets: "Increase transparency in oil markets; eliminate overly restrictive regulatory frameworks that impede investment in the oil sector; promote energy sustainability and efficiency; and enhance dialogue between oil producers and consumers."

With Western Europe's outlook worsening in the second half of 2004, the IMF predicted the euro-zone economy will slip to a growth rate of 1.6% in 2005 but then bounce back to 2.3% next year.

The IMF predicted Japan's economy would slow even more markedly. The fund predicted growth would nosedive to 0.8% in 2005 from 2.6% in 2004, but is expected to rise to 1.9% in 2006.

"After growing strongly in the first quarter of 2004, the Japanese economy subsequently stalled, recording near-zero growth in the remainder of the year," the report said. "Weaker global demand for [information technology] products has undercut export and private sector investment growth, while consumption spending has declined."

The report praised the steady growth in emerging Asian countries, and said growth of four Southeast Asian countries -- Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand -- was 5.8% in 2004 and is projected to drop slightly to 5.4% in 2005 and rebound to 5.8%. The four countries are expected to undergo a

gradual recovery from the slowdown in the second half of 2004, underpinned by strengthening domestic demand.

India also received a positive assessment in the report, which predicted growth of 6.7% in 2005, slightly lower than the 2004 growth rate of 7.3%.

For the Middle East, the IMF projected a growth rate of 5% in 2005, dropping slightly from 5.5% in 2004, but it didn't rule out risk for this region. "On the downside, continuing geopolitical uncertainties in the region could hurt growth," the report said.

As for Iraq, the IMF said that it was making progress, "although the recovery appears to be proceeding more slowly than had earlier been envisaged and inflation has risen sharply in recent months." The IMF urged the newly elected Iraqi government to tighten monetary policy. "With the elections completed," it said, "the government must focus its efforts on developing institutions to support a market-based economy, on reconstructing infrastructure, and on maintaining macroeconomic stability."

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Peaceful Sudan Hungers for U.S. Aid
By Scott Kilman in Chicago and Roger Thurow in Khartoum, Sudan
Staff Reporters of The Wall Street Journal
April 13, 2005; Page A17

Seventeen years ago, Philip Majak abandoned his 30-acre farm in southern Sudan, fleeing the ethnic and religious fighting that would kill two million people over two decades, including his first wife. Now, with a tentative peace treaty holding since January, he is itching to go home.

"My house is destroyed, and my tractor. My 70 cows were stolen, the land has grown wild," he says at a refugee camp outside Khartoum, Sudan's capital. "I'll need help to start farming again." He looks to two sources of support: "God will provide. And America."

Maybe not.

The U.S. government for years pushed hard for peace in the south of Sudan between the Muslim-dominated government in Khartoum and the rebel group supported by the region's Christian residents. The Americans said that as peace came, so would seeds and tools to help Sudanese farmers rebuild one of Africa's potential breadbaskets.

But Sudan's reconstruction period is dawning just as budget pressures in Washington are siphoning money from precisely this sort of U.S.-backed development work around the globe. One project now in limbo would have given Sudanese refugees food for rebuilding farms and roads in the Bahr el Ghazal region -- Mr. Majak's home -- in the southern part of the country.

The U.S. Agency for International Development is reducing funding this fiscal year for 67 development projects in such far-flung places as Angola, Bolivia and Peru. Those projects represent 80% of all international development work financed by USAID's Food for Peace office, the budget for which is shrinking at least 13% to \$1.4 billion during the fiscal year ending in September.

The food-aid crunch could worsen next year. The Bush administration, trying to rein in the U.S.'s record federal budget deficit with broad spending cuts, proposes to slice a further 33% from USAID's Food for Peace budget in fiscal 2006 to \$964 million.

Food for Peace donates cash and American-grown commodities, such as wheat flour, corn, soybeans, lentils and peas, to humanitarian groups for two types of foreign assistance: emergency feeding and long-term-development work. Development projects help poor nations modernize their farms so they are less vulnerable to famine. Humanitarian groups sell the donated commodities to raise money for such things as repairing farm roads, digging irrigation wells and vaccinating children. Some groups give the commodities to villagers and farmers as pay for work on these projects.

Charitable groups rely heavily on the Food for Peace program for their hunger-fighting work in the poorest parts of the world. Catholic Relief Services, for example, says USAID is withholding \$1.6 million of the \$4.4 million in Food for Peace support promised for its work in Angola. As a result, Catholic Relief Services has shelved plans for everything from farming classes to food-for-work projects.

"How can a country as wealthy as the U.S. break these sorts of commitments?" says Marianne Leach, director of government relations in Washington for CARE, which has lost about half of its U.S. funding for development programs in Mozambique and Tajikistan.

White House budget spokesman Noam Neusner says the Bush administration is "providing as much support as we can in an effective way. ... Eradicating hunger is an important priority of this administration."

USAID officials say it is all a matter of priorities. Given budget constraints on the Food for Peace program, they are raiding development projects for commodities and cash to respond to a wave of immediate food shortages in places such as Ethiopia, northern Uganda, Chad and Darfur, the western region of Sudan where fighting continues. Last year 35 countries needed emergency food aid, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization.

"We have a budget crunch," says Andrew S. Natsios, USAID administrator. "Our first priority is to save peoples' lives."

As the swelling U.S. budget deficit creates momentum in Congress and the White House to cut government spending, the Food for Peace budget is particularly vulnerable because America's food-aid practices are under attack at the World Trade Organization. Rival exporting powers long have complained that Washington uses food aid to dump surplus crops, thereby subsidizing U.S. growers.

Congress is on record recognizing the importance of development projects in preventing famines. The 2002 Farm Bill that guides U.S. agricultural policy mandates that 75% of the 2.5 million tons of commodities USAID is supposed to donate through the Food for Peace program goes to nonemergency development projects. But the law gives USAID the power to ignore the mandate during an emergency. As a result, the Bush administration is spending far more of the Food for Peace budget on food emergencies than on development projects.

Other federal programs beyond Food for Peace sponsor overseas development work, too. USAID plans to spend \$562.2 million on agricultural development this fiscal year, double what was spent in fiscal 2001 by all of its programs. But much of the increase is going to a few countries, such as Iraq and Afghanistan. A study released this week by two Washington advocacy groups -- Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa and Resources for the Future -- found that U.S. government support for agricultural development in Africa has stagnated in recent years.

An exception in Africa is Sudan, where Washington plans to spend more on agricultural development in places where peace takes hold. Donors at an international aid conference yesterday pledged \$4.5 billion to rebuild southern Sudan; of that total, \$1.7 billion was committed by the U.S., including \$850 million already committed.

But that represents total aid, not just agriculture. Many needs are still going unmet in southern Sudan. Citing tight funds, USAID rejected a request from World Vision Inc. in September for \$7.8 million of cash and commodities to use in Bahr el Ghazal for emergency food rations as well as food-for-work projects from digging wells to building seed-storage facilities.

Washington would seem to have a lot riding on the reconstruction of southern Sudan. Beyond its plentiful oil, Sudan presents a test of the Bush administration's ability to bring peace to a region that has been a source of instability and terrorism in Africa. The U.S. has given it about \$2.9 billion of humanitarian aid since 1983.

U.S. officials thought long and hard about how to restart the Sudanese economy. A blueprint of sorts is laid out in a 2003 report by USAID. Looking beyond a recent history of three famines and several near-famines, it sees a potential breadbasket. Blessed with a diverse climate and abundant arable land for a wide range of crops, a peaceful Sudan could, with help, emerge as an agricultural exporter.

--Walid Al-Saqaf in Washington contributed to this article.

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Bush Team Launches New 'Hawala' Crackdown

By Walid Al-Saqaf

Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal

May 24, 2005; Page A6

WASHINGTON -- The Bush administration has launched a new crackdown on "hawala," or informal money-transfer businesses popular in the Arab world, announcing yesterday a series of new arrests and guilty pleas from U.S. residents suspected of funding terrorists.

During the past two weeks, officials have "shut down a number of unlicensed money transmittal businesses that were responsible for the transfer of millions of dollars to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran," Michael J. Garcia, assistant secretary of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement arm of the Department of Homeland Security, said in a statement.

The arrests were conducted under the authority of the USA Patriot Act, passed shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and designed to give the federal government greater power on multiple fronts to undermine terrorists. Congress is currently debating renewing the act, and some legislators advocate tougher provisions cracking down on hawala.

As part of yesterday's announcement, the ICE also released a broader look at the scale of the anti-hawala campaign of the past three and a half years.

Since the Patriot Act's enactment, a total of 140 individuals have been arrested as part of the agency's attempt to track down and curb unlicensed informal money-transfer businesses and \$25.5 million has been seized, according to ICE.

Many Arab-Americans have complained about the anti-hawala effort, saying it is misguided and hurts their community. The use of hawalas for terrorist or illegal activity is rare, said Munir Mawari, an Arab-American writer working for Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Daily's Washington, D.C., bureau in an interview. Al-Sharq Al-Awsat is a pan-Arab Daily newspaper based in London.

"Thousands of Muslims in the U.S. have been using hawalas innocently to send their families small amounts of money for tens of years," Mr. Mawari said. "It is unjust to deprive them from using hawalas so abruptly. Instead, reasonable alternatives should have been proposed and introduced to those expatriates whose families see hawalas as vital for their livelihood," he added.

Among those recently arrested and charged for operating a hawala business was Rahim Bariiek, 46 years old, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Afghanistan and resident of Herndon, Va. Mr. Bariiek pleaded guilty last Friday to charges of operating an unlicensed money-transmittal business that wired millions of dollars to Iran, Pakistan and areas in Afghanistan under the control of the Taliban from 2001 to 2003.

ICE said Mr. Bariiek is scheduled to be sentenced July 29 and faces a maximum five-year imprisonment.

Telephone calls to Mr Bariiek's home weren't returned. His lawyer declined to comment.

Noor Alocozy, 41, a native of Afghanistan who is living in San Francisco, also pleaded guilty Friday to charges of operating an unlicensed money-transmittal business that funneled nearly \$1 million to Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere. Mr. Alocozy, who is expected to be sentenced Aug. 26, claimed he was sending the money to assist in the capturing of Osama bin Laden, and hence collect the \$50 million reward announced by the U.S. government.

Mr. Alocozy's lawyer, Steven Shaiken of San Francisco, said his client pleaded guilty based only on the fact that he was operating a money-transfer business that was unlicensed and didn't realize that he needed a license. Mr. Shaiken said the money was transmitted over "several years," and added that his client wasn't interested in receiving the reward money himself from an arrest of Mr. bin Laden, but that maybe some of his clients were.

On May 13, 2005, Eltaib Yousif, 41, a resident of Castro Valley, Calif., whose original country wasn't revealed, made his initial court appearance in federal court in San Francisco after being indicted on

charges of illegally moving more than \$1.5 million outside the U.S. from September 2001 through November 2003.

Mr. Yousif isn't listed in telephone directories, and the name of a lawyer representing him couldn't be found.

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Newsweek Has Arabic Edition Challenge

By Walid Al-Saqaf

The Wall Street Journal

May 25, 2005; Page B2E

When protests erupted in the Islamic world after Newsweek magazine ran its Quran-desecration story, television footage showed rioters waving pages of the magazine. What viewers may not have noticed is that the pages were printed in Arabic.

In 2000 Newsweek became -- and still remains -- the only major American-owned weekly magazine to print an Arabic-language edition throughout the Middle East and North Africa. The move played an important role in spreading the story and inflaming the riots that followed Newsweek's report in early May that U.S. military investigators had found that a copy of the Quran had been flushed down a toilet at the U.S. base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Despite a circulation of 30,000 in the region, newsstands, universities and mosques made copies of the Newsweek issue available. And even though the riots broke out first in Pakistan and Afghanistan, two countries where Arabic isn't the dominant language, Newsweek's story spread much more quickly thanks to its Arabic edition.

Newspapers such as Saudi Arabia's Asharq Al-Awsat have long had rights to publish translated versions of stories from American publications. But Newsweek Bil Logha Al-Arabia -- "Newsweek in Arabic" -- remains the only major U.S. magazine available in its entirety to non-English speaking Arabs.

Other outlets available in the Muslim world include Radio Sawa, a U.S. government-funded channel that broadcasts music and news, and the Web sites of some Western news organizations, such as CNNArabic.com and BBCArabic.com.

Newsweek's Arabic edition is published in partnership with Kuwait's Al-Watan Publishing Group. With the exception of a brief editorial, its content primarily consists of stories translated from the English-language edition. CNNArabic.com, by contrast, relies more on original reporting by Arabic-speaking reporters.

In its May 23 U.S. edition, Newsweek ran a letter from Editor Mark Whitaker and said the magazine regretted that "we got any part of our story wrong, and extend our sympathies to victims of the violence and to the U.S. soldiers caught in its midst."

Newsweek didn't run the letter in its Arabic edition, but did run a translated version of a story by Assistant Managing Editor Evan Thomas examining the fallout from the story, which said, "radical Islamic foes . . . quickly exploited local discontent . . . and riots began breaking out last week."

When asked why Newsweek didn't print an apology or offer sympathies in its Arabic version, Newsweek spokesman Ken Weine said, "because this is a licensing relationship, Newsweek provides its partners with a menu of articles to select from and one of them was the editor's note, which they didn't use."

Newsweek's new Arabic edition out yesterday contains two stories translated from the new U.S. edition that touch on the Quran story. One is an editor's note that admits fault and pledges "to earn their renewed confidence by producing the best possible magazine each and every week." Interestingly, the new Arabic edition doesn't contain a story that ran in the new U.S. edition titled, "The Qur'an Question," which suggests that it is still possible the Quran was in fact desecrated. Massive rallies are scheduled to take place in at least five Muslim countries on Friday as part of "International Protest Day against the Desecration of Quran," which was called for by Qazi Hussain Ahmed, president of Pakistan's Islamist alliance.

Newsweek, owned by Washington Post Co., says it has no plans to discontinue its Arabic version.

World Bank Aims For Big Impact In Small Projects

By Walid Al-Saqaf

The Wall Street Journal

8 June 2005

WASHINGTON -- A radio soap opera for Vietnamese farmers that folds in advice on curbing pesticide use. New Bolivian planting methods to keep potato weevils at bay. Trees that can purify water in Nigeria.

These are among the 30 projects recently awarded grants by the World Bank's "Development Marketplace" program. The seven-year-old initiative, totaling \$3 million this year, is aimed at supporting local initiatives that improve the lives of poor people and the environment.

The World Bank traditionally lends to governments in developing nations and often has been accused by antipoverty activists of focusing on big power, water and other projects that ignore the needs of local communities. James Wolfensohn, who stepped down May 31 as the bank's president, encouraged the institution to deal more directly with private groups -- such as health organizations, human-rights groups and others -- to ensure that the bank's lending benefited those at the bottom of the income ladder. The Development Marketplace is a small-scale effort to tap and foster antipoverty entrepreneurs in poor countries.

In the past decade, the bank has channeled billions of dollars to nongovernmental organizations, foundations, trade unions and other so-called civil-society organizations. These organizations were involved in 70% of World Bank projects in 2002, the latest year for which data are available, up from less than 22% in 1990.

Mr. Wolfensohn, announcing the Development Marketplace grants last month, recalled that the bank initially rejected the idea, but its proponents persisted -- and ultimately won. Since 1998, Development Marketplace has put \$22 million into more than 370 projects in 61 countries. This year the bank handed out another 30 grants, ranging from \$40,000 to \$150,000.

In water-scarce Yemen, for instance, the bank awarded \$127,000 for a project that would channel the millions of gallons of water used in mosques for ritual cleansings to irrigate farms. The project is among the few with a dual purpose of raising religious awareness and helping the environment.

Others included a \$147,850 Bolivian project to control the destructive Andean potato weevil with a trap baited with synthetic plant compounds. The traps, which attract both the male and female weevils, are believed to be more effective than typical traps that use sex pheromones to lure one sex or the other and far better for the environment than using pesticides. In Nigeria, a religious-based foundation will receive a \$150,000 grant to use wood from invasive, nonnative trees to make low-cost coffins. The proposal appears to be a triple play that cuts funeral costs, creates jobs and removes trees that crowd out native varieties.

An award of about \$100,000 went to the Philippines, where university researchers plan to roll out a program that raises ducks and cultivates rice together. The idea is that the ducks will feast on the overabundant golden snail, a major pest for rice farmers. Researchers believe 17,340

duck-farm families will benefit from less expensive duck feed, while rice farmers will gain from an environmentally friendly and inexpensive way to fight the destructive snail.

If all goes according to plan, 10 million farm families in Vietnam soon will be able to tune into an informative and motivational radio soap opera created by the International Rice Research Institute and social scientists, ecologists and creative writers that aims to convey environmentally sound farming practices and reduce use of pesticides. In addition to the twice-a-week program, the effort includes local competitions and radio clubs, and plans call for distributing printed materials and videos. The Environment Radio Soap Opera project is estimated to cost about \$162,000, \$132,000 of which will be covered by the World Bank.

"The Miracle Tree for Clean Water" is a water-purification project in Nigeria that uses crushed seeds of the native *Moringa Oleifera* tree. The seeds' natural coagulative properties have been shown to remove 99.5% of turbidity, 98% of suspended solids and as much as 99% of bacteria. In addition, the seeds produce edible oil. The World Bank awarded the project \$120,000.

Muslim Activist Wages 'Gender Jihad'

By Walid Al-Saqaf

The Wall Street Journal via Dow Jones

July 6, 2005: Page B3

RICHMOND, Va. -- Amina Wadud, an associate professor of Islamic Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University, is waging a holy war -- against the male-dominated traditions of Islam.

A "gender jihad," she calls it. Dr. Wadud's most prominent act of rebellion was leading a mixed-gender Friday prayer service in New York in March, in defiance of centuries of Muslim tradition. It has made her a cause celebre among feminists, and a target of scorn in Islamic countries world-wide. The issue came up recently in the Malaysian Parliament, where a government official suggested that any groups supporting Dr. Wadud would be punished.

Despite the criticism, Dr. Wadud is continuing her campaign. She was one of the featured speakers last month at an academic conference in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on "The Changeable and Unchangeable in Islamic Thought," where she delivered a lecture on reading the Quran through a "gender perspective." And she is finishing a book, to be released next year by a British publisher, titled "Inside the Gender Jihad: Reform in Islam." She describes it as an academic tract for "contesting the unequal treatment that women have experienced . . . in the context of Muslim communities."

Dr. Wadud is one of a growing number of Western Muslim women publicly doing so. Asra Nomani, a former Wall Street Journal reporter, is leading what she calls the "Muslim Women's Freedom Tour" to mosques around the U.S. And Irshad Manji, a lesbian activist living in Toronto, has created a stir with her book, "The Trouble With Islam," an "open letter" to Muslim world about, among other things, its treatment of women.

Dr. Wadud, 52 years old, is the senior member of that movement. She says she first gave a public Friday khutbah, or Islamic sermon, in 1994 in South Africa, and recalls "a huge backlash."

"Dr. Wadud was one of the first scholars I called in October 2003 when the men at my mosque in Morgantown, W.Va., told me that women must enter through the back door and remain in a secluded balcony," Ms. Nomani says.

But Dr. Wadud is surprisingly ambivalent about the new burst of activity around a cause she has been pursuing for more than a decade. Dr. Wadud's March service was organized with the help of Ms. Nomani, whom she met in person for the first time the day before the event. But she says she won't work with Ms. Nomani again, saying, without elaborating, that she found they have "various agendas." (Ms. Nomani, asked of a split, answers that "I fully respect and honor Dr. Wadud.")

While Ms. Nomani and Ms. Manji welcome widespread media coverage, Dr. Wadud has largely shunned the media and is disappointed with how her actions have been covered. In a rare interview here in her small, cluttered office with paint peeling off the walls, she said she found it "most heartbreaking" that the prayer was "carried over in the press as a slap in the face of the Muslim world."

Despite the appearance of growing support for her cause, Dr. Wadud says, "I have always felt alone in my struggle."

Dr. Wadud's ambivalence flows in part from her attempts to straddle the sloganeering world of activism with the nuanced halls of academe. She calls herself "pro-faith, pro-feminist," but insists "I am not a feminist."

Her complex outlook also comes after a complex religious journey, which she started as Mary Teasley, the daughter of an African-American Methodist minister in Silver Spring, Md. Mary was about 11 when her father was evicted from his property. She witnessed him losing his ministry, falling ill and dying when she was in her early 20s.

She practiced Buddhism for a year when she was 18, then converted to Islam --and changed her name -- when she was a college student at the University of Pennsylvania in the early 1970s. It was a time when

Muslims, including the Nation of Islam or Black Muslims, were finding many African-Americans willing to accept Islam.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, Dr. Wadud was married and divorced, twice, to fellow African-American Muslim converts. She studied Arabic and taught English in Libya, obtained a Ph.D. in Islamic Studies and Arabic at the University of Michigan and spent three years in Malaysia teaching and organizing a women's rights group.

In the early 1990s, she landed at Virginia Commonwealth, where her classes on Islam now draw between 70 to 100 students. She developed a specialty of applying feminist interpretations of the Quran. She drew international notice among Islamic scholars with her 1992 book "Qur'an and Women: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective."

She has argued that original Islamic teachings didn't require discrimination against women but instead that modern Muslims "have unfortunately used highly restrictive interpretations of history to move backward," as she put in at a news conference on the day of her March prayer service. She calls for a reform in particular of the "Fuqaha," or the official experts on Islamic jurisprudence. "We need fuqaha to be astute about politics and gender, as well as the disclosure of Allah, and not fuqaha who stay isolated from the real world," she says.

In the March prayer service -- held in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, an Episcopal church in Manhattan -- Dr. Wadud said that, as a religion, Islam treats men and women equally but men had rewritten Islamic rules "to justify the imprisonment of woman to only be complementary to men as sexual partners." She wasn't afraid to be provocative. In the sermon, she referred to Allah as both male and female. "Allah cannot be limited to being either a he or a she," she said.

The event didn't get much attention in the U.S, but triggered a wave of criticism across the Middle East. Al-Jazeera, the television network, headlined a report on its Web site: "Cleric: Women may not lead prayer." It quoted the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Ali Gumma, as saying that "the vast majority of scholars say it is forbidden." A Saudi newspaper charged: "Feminist Agenda May Harm Muslim Women's Interest" and quoted the Saudi Islamic Fiqh (jurisprudence) Academy as condemning the action as "misleading heresy and sedition."

Today, this opposition has spilled over to the Internet forums, where death threats are often found. Because of security concerns, Dr. Wadud was forced for a time to teach classes by video hookup from her home to a basement room in the main university library.

"My classes gather there, and I log on to the remote-access equipment and they can see a talking-head version of me through two huge TV screens in the room," she says. "This was arranged for all three of my classes until one complained, and they allow me to return to campus in order to meet them in person."

British Police Fear More Attacks by Terrorists**Lack of Clues, Hard Leads****Suggests Bombers Learned From Madrid-Blast Arrests****By Keith Johnson in Madrid, David Crawford in Berlin, Jeanne Whalen in London, and Jay Solomon in Washington****Staff Reporters of The Wall Street Journal****July 12, 2005; Page A2**

British police are concerned that the terrorists' elusiveness after Thursday's blasts means the attackers have learned from mistakes that led to the discovery of the Madrid bombers last year, according to European law-enforcement officials close to the investigation.

British police raised the death toll from the attacks on three subways and a bus to at least 52. Investigators have been pursuing similarities between the London bombings and those in Madrid, which killed 191 people. In Madrid, the train bombers tried in vain to blow up a high-speed rail link days after the first blast but couldn't place the detonators.

Two weeks later, the bulk of the terrorists blew themselves up in a Madrid safe house after they were cornered by police. Investigators said they had planned additional attacks in Madrid: Plans found in the building's rubble highlighted new targets, and the seven terrorists retained more than half of their initial cache of 440 pounds of dynamite, according to Spanish police and court documents.

That has sparked concern among British police that the terrorists involved in last week's bombings could have additional explosives and operatives for more attacks, these officials say. A British police spokesman wasn't available to comment. British police have warned the public to be on high alert for attacks, and Britain is on a higher security alert than after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in New York and Washington.

Police on Tuesday raided five residences in northern England in connection with the London bombings, Scotland Yard said. No arrests had been made, the Associated Press reported. Police described the raids as part of an "intelligence-led operation" but would say beyond that only that the activity was in West Yorkshire.

Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair said the raids were connected to the massive investigation of Thursday's attacks. "There have been a series of searches carried out in Yorkshire. Those searches are still going on. There's very little else I can say at the moment, but this activity is directly connected to the outrages on Thursday," he said in an interview with British Broadcasting Corp. radio.

Counterterrorism experts say radical cells learn from each attack and refine their operations, making preventive measures and police investigations more difficult. "Terrorists discover our tactics and respond," said Bernd Carstensen, a German counterterrorism detective. "The competition is continuous."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, speaking in Parliament, said there was no specific intelligence pointing to the attacks before they happened and that they couldn't have been prevented. He said it was probable the London attacks were carried out by Islamist extremists, though no group has been blamed.

The suspected masterminds of Madrid still are at large. A senior Spanish antiterrorist investigator said in an interview it was "very likely" that Moroccan Amer el Azizi, who allegedly helped organize the Madrid bombings, also helped organize the London attacks. Mr. Azizi is at large, after fleeing Spain in November 2001 for Tehran.

British police also have asked their European counterparts for information on Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, a 47-year-old Syrian militant, in connection with the London attacks. Spanish police believe Mr. Nasar may have helped organize the Madrid attacks.

U.S. officials have said in recent days that they were working with British intelligence to find Mr. Nasar, who is a naturalized citizen of Spain. U.S. and European authorities said they also are investigating whether Mr. Nasar is a link between senior al Qaeda leaders in Pakistan and Afghanistan and European-based militants and sleeper cells.

As recently as January, Mr. Nasar called for the use of dirty bombs inside the U.S. in an article in a Syrian online magazine. The comments were circulated on a number of important Islamic Web sites.

Mr. Nasar wrote that Muslim militants world-wide should work with countries that could possess nuclear and biological weapons -- such as North Korea and Iran -- to attain the tools to deliver a devastating blow inside the U.S.

As of yesterday, Mr. Nasar's writings were still posted on the Web site. Counterterrorism experts said they are unsure of Mr. Nasar's whereabouts, but he is believed to have been operating out of Pakistan and Afghanistan as recently as November. Officials at the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence yesterday declined to comment on Mr. Nasar.

The attackers in London already have avoided some mistakes that put police on the trail of the Madrid bombers within two days, the time they took to make their first arrest. The Madrid terrorists abandoned a stolen van with detonators, a cassette tape of Quranic verses and multiple fingerprints. London police still are searching for hard leads inside the subway tunnels where the bombs exploded and on the remains of the bus.

Andy Trotter, deputy chief constable of the British Transport Police, said the world's leading forensic experts were examining the bomb fragments for clues. He said police were taking "many hundreds of statements" from members of the public who believe they have information tied to the bombings.

The London bombers also apparently relied on timing devices for the explosives on the subway cars, instead of using cellphones to detonate the bombs, according to British police. Sir Ian Blair, commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, said at a news conference the explosives in the London bombs "certainly were not homemade" but declined to give more detail.

In Madrid, the bombs were detonated using cellphone alarms. By tracing the serial number and subscriber card inside the one cellphone bomb that failed to explode, Spanish police quickly traced the attack to a shop in Madrid run by known radical Muslims. The police then traced cellphone calls from those initially arrested to round up the bulk of those who carried out the bombings.

According to Spanish court documents and police reports, suspected Islamic terrorists have refined how they plan for such attacks. First, they started using coded conversations to confound wiretaps, and then they began using encryption to try to establish secure communications.

The aftermath of the London attacks continued to ripple through Europe. During the weekend, police in Italy mounted a broad antiterrorism sweep, arresting 142 suspects, 83 of them immigrants. The stepped-up operation was in response to the bombing in London, though authorities didn't say that any of the suspects were linked to Thursday's attacks.

--- Gabriel Kahn in Rome and Walid al-Saqaf in Washington contributed to this article.

Yemeni female scholar achieves excellence in the U.S.

By Walid Al-Saqaf

Washington, DC for Yemen Times

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One may call her an achiever, others could say she is a humanitarian, but there is no doubt that this year, Dr. Bilqis Mohammed Jubari, 36, can be described as a revolutionary pioneer that brought pride and hope to her country.

Mother of a boy and wife of prominent Yemeni scholar Dr. Mohamed Al-Maitami, Mrs. Bilqis has demonstrated that Yemeni women can achieve excellence when given the opportunity. By receiving the 2005 Family Counseling Program's certification distinction with honor from the Towson University in Maryland, the USA, Bilqis has a lot to feel proud of.

Her dedication at work and passion in caring for others are among the things in which she believed. As a scholar, a mother, and a community leader, by winning this certificate Bilqis has opened the eyes of the American community to the potential of Arab and Muslim women. In fact, her impact was been widely felt by the Glenwood Life Counseling Center where she worked to the degree that the management asked her to stay and join the staff as permanent member. Yet, despite the attractive offer, she declined it for one noble reason. "I want to come back to my home country to help Yemeni women who are in much greater need for my professional expertise." she said.

For the last year, Bilqis has been practicing her knowledge and using her expertise at Baltimore's Glenwood Life Counseling Center, which is among the most prominent counseling centers in the state of Maryland, and arguably the whole country. During her time there, she had passionately assisted in the recovery of eight patients with psychological disorders caused by the excessive use of narcotics and drugs for about 20 years. She was able to help six of them regain their lives after a rehabilitation process in a record time of less than a year. Thanks to her, the five patients have embraced life again and gradually turning to be active citizens. Her unique skills and talents have made her a distinguished member of the Center and resulted in requests by the management that she stays.

A successful mother herself, Bilqis believes in her ability to prove all those doubters in the abilities of Yemeni woman wrong. Coming from a traditional and conservative Muslim background, Bilqis has demonstrated that Yemeni women can serve their community as well as their families. Looking at the history of Bilqis, one can easily find the marks of a dedicated hard working individual directly influenced by the love of learning and teaching others. She taught English language in a preliminary school in Sanaa before she moved up in the hierarchy to become a researcher at the Yemeni Center for Studies and Research at Sanaa University. With the support and motivation she received from her husband, she climbed up the ladder to become a prominent Professor of Psychology at the Faculty of Arts in Sanaa University, to which she is still affiliated today.

Pursuing academic excellence and being a female pioneer have always been a mark of her academic career ever since she received her BA and MA in Psychology from Sanaa University, all with honor degrees. Her Ph.D. thesis was on 'Marital Adjustment and its Relation to Parental Dealing with Children and Children's Psychological Health', which gave her a distinction degree with honor from Sanaa University in 2003.

It would have been very difficult to predict that a woman born in the town of Dhamar, known for its strict Islamic and conservative traditions, is now a pioneer Arab Psychology scholar in the US. Many female activists in Yemen believe women like Bilqis serve as a clear example of the potential of every Yemeni and Arab woman.

Today, Bilqis wishes to help her country combat the many social and community challenges it is facing. Poverty, illiteracy –particularly among females-, and outdated backward traditions are a few obstacles that have contributed to Yemen's inability to catch-up with other more developed countries in the region. Lack of human resources is another challenge, so is lack of proper conditions for work and productivity. Despite all of those problems, Bilqis believes she has a mission to accomplish in Yemen, and as she helped American patients in Maryland, she wishes to help thousands back in Yemen, the country where she belongs.

She is one of a few Yemeni pioneer females that will be remembered as a shining example of a dedicated female scholar in Yemen's modern history.

POLITICS AND POLICY

Mideast Free-Trade Plan Inches Forward
**Fighting Resistance, U.S. Slowly
Signs Partners, Although the EU
Has Ideas of Its Own**

By WALID AL-SAQAF
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
August 23, 2005; Page A4

WASHINGTON -- The Bush administration may be having trouble converting the Middle East into a hub of democracy, but it is gaining ground in the effort to make the region a free-trading bloc.

President Bush declared in 2003 his goal of establishing a free-trade area in the Middle East, seizing on economic prosperity as another tool to be used in the war against terror and extremism. Such an agreement would unite more than a dozen countries in the Middle East into the seventh-largest trading partner of the U.S. The Bush administration says Arab nations more integrated into the global economy not only will have a better shot at the kind of economic success that staves off radicals, but also will cultivate populations less likely to see the U.S. as an enemy.

At the time the initiative was launched, only Israel and Jordan had signed free-trade pacts with the U.S. Since then, officials from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative have pursued a strategy of reaching agreements with other countries until a foundation is laid to negotiate with the region as a whole, as they did in the past couple of years in Central America.

Bahrain and Morocco reached separate agreements in the past two years, and U.S. negotiators holding talks with Oman and the United Arab Emirates are hopeful that both countries will follow suit this year. Informal discussions also are under way with other countries in the region, including Egypt.

Neena Moorjani, a spokeswoman for the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, said, "We're in the final stages of implementing the free trade agreement with Morocco, awaiting congressional passage of the Bahrain FTA and looking to complete negotiations with Oman and the United Arab Emirates in the near future."

The campaign is stirring animosity and protectionism in parts of the region. Saudi Arabia, for one, objected to the U.S.-Bahrain agreement, saying it violated protocols of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council and jeopardized plans among that bloc for a common currency and free-trade zone of its own.

In January, Saudi Finance Minister Ibrahim Al-Assaf announced that "any GCC member that signs an individual free-trade agreement contravenes the GCC's economic agreements," and the kingdom put a 5% tariff on U.S. goods entering the country through Bahrain.

The Dubai Chamber of Commerce opposed the deal between the U.S. and the United Arab Emirates, arguing that local banks could become takeover targets if the agreement reduces restrictions on foreign direct investment. This month, the chamber issued a study saying the takeover of GCC banks "could be easier than perceived, given the level of nonperforming loans burdening the GCC banks."

In Morocco, 22 civil-society groups formed an organization whose name translates into the "National Coalition for the Fight Against the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S." Abdulkaliq ibn Dhikri, a member of the coalition -- comprised of groups that include labor unions, nongovernmental organizations and others -- says the deal would harm several local sectors and bring about the "collapse of the Moroccan pharmaceutical industry." The coalition has raised enough red flags to persuade the Moroccan Parliament to delay ratifying the trade agreement the country signed with the U.S. in 2004.



U.S. trade negotiators often address such complaints by pointing to the example of Jordan, whose free-trade pact with the U.S. was implemented in 2001. Jordan's exports to the U.S. rose to \$673.4 million in 2003 from \$30.9 million in 1999, the Jordanian government reports. Foreign direct investment in Jordan to surged to \$379 million in 2003 from \$158 million in 1999, according to the World Investment Report 2004. And the country's economy is expanding.

This month, Amman praised the agreement, saying it will "provide benefits to consumers and businesses in Jordan and the U.S. by increasing choices and lowering the prices of goods and services."

As talks with several countries continue, the U.S. is competing with the European Union to stitch together a Middle East free-trade area. While President Bush has set a goal of implementing a regional pact by 2013, the EU is looking to establish an overarching accord with Mediterranean nations, including those in North Africa, by 2010.

The EU is in the lead, having signed agreements with eight countries to the U.S.'s four. Underlying the competition are contrasting strategies: The U.S. is proceeding piecemeal, holding separate negotiations with each country, while the EU is approaching trading blocs as a whole.

The closer ties many countries in North Africa and the Middle East have with Europe can sway diplomacy, but in some cases they are fostering the U.S. cause. Moroccan officials, for example, are looking to the U.S. deal as a way to minimize their dependence on trade with Europe. Other Middle East countries object to a regional trade alliance because it would require cooperation with Israel. To prevent this from sinking a pact's prospects, U.S. trade negotiators are hoping to bring Egypt on board. Given its size and prominence in the region, as well as its status as one of the few Arab governments that has diplomatic relations with Israel, U.S. officials hope an agreement with Egypt would unleash a positive domino effect across the region.

The impediment with Egypt, many political observers from the region have noted, is the slow pace of political overhaul. President Bush has indicated a preference for pursuing talks with the countries furthest along the path to democracy. Catherine Novelli, then assistant U.S. trade representative for Europe and the Mediterranean, rejected this assumption in May, saying, "in the free-trade agreement negotiations, we're talking about economics," not about political positions.

Meantime, U.S. officials are working with Egyptians to settle a dispute over how imported soft drinks are taxed, a priority for U.S. exporters. A successful resolution could pave the way for formal discussions on a broad trade deal next year.

Elsewhere, Moroccan officials suggest their agreement with the U.S. will weather the social and economic controversies it has generated. And the retaliatory Saudi tariff on U.S. goods flowing through Bahrain -- invoked to "protect local industry," according to the Saudi finance minister -- recently was rescinded.

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