

ALGERIA TODAY

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ALGERIAN EMBASSY CELEBRATES NATIONAL HOLIDAY

There was a line to get into the Ritz Carlton ballroom on the evening of Thursday, November 10th, 2005. Ambassadors, diplomats, a multitude of U. S. government officials and representatives were amongst the guests invited to the Embassy of Algeria's reception in honor of November 1st, the National Holiday marking the 51st Anniversary of the Revolution. The guests stood in line to be welcomed in by the Algerian Ambassador, H.E. Amine Kherbi, and his wife, and other Embassy officials and their spouses.

Guests were privileged to a pure Algerian evening. The wives of the diplomats wore elegant traditional outfits, proudly bearing the country's rich cultural styles. A melt-in-your-mouth lamb and seven-vegetable Algerian couscous was served buffet style and recreated the atmosphere of an Algerian gathering. Afterwards, guests indulged further in the culture by appreciating the Algerian renowned "Deglet Nour" dates and a variety of traditional desserts.

The night's festivities were still going on at 10 p.m., and many guests were obviously reluctant to leave.

PRESIDENT BOUTEFLIKA CALLS FOR AN INFORMATION SOCIETY "BENEFITING ALL"

President of the Republic Abdelaziz Bouteflika attended the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunisia from November 16th to 18th, 2005. This was the second phase of WSIS after Geneva in 2003, in order to assess the feasibility of the Geneva Plan.

Algeria as a participant in the WSIS, has been actively working on bridging the digital divide. In his statement to the summit, President Bouteflika stated that Algeria has liberalized its information technology and communications sectors according to the 2003 frameworks established in the Geneva Plan and in the "Declaration of Principles."

The President recognized that with time, information technology will only become more complex and that the priority should be to immediately build "an information society beneficial to all." He said that developing countries often suffer

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CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT CALLS FOR AFRICAN ROLE IN UN REFORM

Mr. Ahmed Ouyahia, the Algerian Head of Government, attended the 5th Extraordinary Session of the African Union Conference in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia on November 1st, 2005, to discuss UN reform and Africa's additional seats to the UN Security Council.

Mr. Ouyahia called upon the African countries to remain united in the promotion of UN reform. The conference reaffirmed that Algeria continues to pursue the promotion of a consensus and will consider the means to ensure that the objectives of reform are fought for.

MINISTER BEDJAOUI AT FORUM FOR FUTURE

Asks states to focus on education as a step towards democracy

The Minister of State and of Foreign Affairs, Mohamed Bedjaoui, represented Algeria at the *Forum for the Future*, in Manama, Bahrain, from November 11-12th, 2005. Minister Bedjaoui said that “democracy starts with a shared education and equal opportunities for all children and for those that seek it.” For Minister Bedjaoui, illiteracy is a factor that hinders development and democracy: “the impact of illiteracy is the most important and the most painful.”

He called upon nations to promote “their rich cultural and intellectual heritage and use it as a base to consolidate and develop their academic curricula.” Minister Bedjaoui said that is each country’s responsibility to encourage cooperation with one another, respectful of their traditions and cultures.

ALGERIA, US PARTNER IN ENGLISH INSTRUCTION

The Ministry of Education in Algeria teamed up with the US Embassy in Algeria on October 29th, 2005, in a protocol agreement that supports the implementation of a two-year project that will enforce English language instruction, teach technology and communication skills, and provide more educational opportunities between American and Algerian public schools.

AMBASSADOR KHERBI SPEAKS AT NDU SYMPOSIUM ON AFRICA

Ambassador Amine Kherbi served as a panelist in the National Defense University’s Symposium, “*Africa: Vital to U.S. Security?*” from November 15th to 16th, 2005. The symposium explored Africa’s strategic importance to the US and how broad international engagement could help African countries handle their key challenges. The Ambassador was on a panel that examined the causes of terrorism and other transnational threats. In one of the documents he submitted, *An African Perspective on the Global Fight Against Terrorism*, he addressed the importance of developing Africa’s capacities through institution building and law enforcement as a means to improve security.

US BASKETBALL STARS CONDUCT YOUTH CLINICS



US basketball stars, Sam Perkins, Andrea Stinson and Shameka Christon, took part in a clinic on technique and team-building in Algeria from November 9-12, 2005. As sports envoys for the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), they worked with boys and girls, ages 7-17, on basketball drills and on team building activities. The ECA and the U.S. embassy in Algeria partnered with the NBA, and its corporate partner *Reebok*, to sponsor basketball clinics and arranged to distribute a few thousand pairs of new basketball shoes .

UNITED STATES REOPENED CONSULAR OFFICE IN ALGERIA

The American Embassy in Algeria announced on Sunday, October 23rd, 2005, that its consular section will resume receiving visa applications starting November 5th. The US Ambassador to Algeria, Richard W. Erdman, said that this marks a new step in American-Algerian relations. The American Consular office in Algiers closed its doors in 1995.

ALGERIA'S SONATRACH, US SEMPRA SIGN 20-YEAR DRAFT AGREEMENT

Algeria's state-owned and leading energy company, Sonatrach, signed a Heads of Agreement (HOA) on October 24th, 2005 with US Fortune 500 firm, Sempra LNG, a unit of Sempra Energy, to negotiate bringing Algerian natural gases to the U.S. Gulf Coast and consider additional US marketing opportunities.

Sonatrach, as Algeria's natural gas and oil enterprise, plays the lead role in energy-related transactions. The non-binding HOA contemplates a 20-year agreement where Algeria supplies the American market daily with about 250-500 million cubic feet of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Sempra LNG will facilitate the movement of Algeria's natural gas throughout the North American marketplace reinforcing Sonatrach's position in the Atlantic basin.

Most recently, on November 9, 2005, Algeria's newspaper *La Tribune*, reported that Sonatrach agreed to sell 90 million crude oil barrels to the American Valero Energy Corporation (VEC) over a five year span.

IMF RECOGNIZES ALGERIA'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN ECONOMIC STABILITY

Managing Director of the IMF, Mr. Rodrigo de Rato, visited Algeria from November 21-22, 2005 and stated that Algeria has made "remarkable success in restoring macroeconomic stability and progress has been made in liberalizing foreign trade, and increasing economic growth." He added that Algeria's "main challenge is to quicken the pace of sustainable growth in order to reduce further the level of unemployment. The increased political stability and Algeria's strong financial position create an ideal window of opportunity to tackle this challenge."

ALGERIA IS AN ESSENTIAL NATO PARTNER

A seminar on NATO-Algeria cooperation took place in Algiers early November. Jean Fournet, NATO's Vice General Secretary described the relationship as "excellent" and one of "remarkable development."

Algeria is a recent addition to the Mediterranean dialogue, having joined in 2000. It remains focused on maintaining professional

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UN ACCEPTS ALGERIA'S PEACE AND SECURITY RESOLUTION

The First Commission of the UN adopted Algeria's draft resolution on peace and security in the Mediterranean on Tuesday October 25, 2005. Algeria called upon all Mediterranean countries to ratify the international conventions on non-proliferation of nuclear arms if they had not already done so. The text encouraged transparency and confidence between countries as a measure to campaign for peaceful relations in the region.

BOUTEFLIKA ADHERES TO PROMISE FOR "WORLD WITHOUT MINES"

Algeria, a signatory of the Ottawa Convention for a "world without mines," decided to destroy the last of its stock of anti-personnel mines. On Sunday, November 20th, 2005, President Bouteflika attended the closing ceremony of the antipersonnel mines destruction operation.

Mrs. Jody Williams, the founding coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, and winner of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, was invited to the event by President Bouteflika.

PARLIAMENT ADOPTS 2006 FINANCE ACT

On Tuesday, November 14th, 2005, a large majority of the National People's Assembly adopted the 2006 Finance Act. There were no abstentions in the voting process.

This act finances the first full year of the enforcement of the additional growth supporting program from 2005-2009, expected to reach a budget of 4,600 billion DA, or \$60 billion.

**EMBASSY OF THE PEOPLE'S
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
ALGERIA**

**2118 KALORAMA RD, NW,
WASHINGTON, D.C., 20008**

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

TEL: 202-265-3893

FAX: 202-667-2174

EMAIL:

AMBASSADOROFFICE@YAHOO.COM

DEVELOPMENTS

- President Bouteflika presided over the first day of the Judiciary for 2005-2006 on Sunday, November 20th, 2005. He called for a profound change in the way justice is administered, specifically referring to the incorporation of the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation voted by referendum on September 29th, 2005.

- According to the Algerian News Agency, *Algerie Presse Service*, Algerian Finance Minister Mourad Medelci estimates that the new general budget deficit (2006) will reach \$13.3 billion. The government purposefully targeted a budget deficit instead of a balanced budget in order to absorb the huge available liquidity in the Algerian markets and avoid inflation rise. Minister Medelci added that half of the budget deficit would be covered through government's reserves at the central bank.

- The Algerian National Office of Statistics revealed that Algeria's GDP has increased by approximately 73% over the last ten years.

- The *National Center of Algerian Customs' Information-technology and Statistics* said that Algerian imports went up \$12.91 billion from January to September 2005, and that global imports went up \$15.72 billion.

- New Algerian identification papers—biometric passports - are scheduled for distribution in 2008. The cards will be hard to falsify since they will have a magnetic band, an information number, and a photo.

SOUAD MASSI RELEASES 3rd CD, *Mesk Elil*



Algerian singer Souad Massi recently released her third CD, *Mesk Elil* (Honeysuckle) at the end of October 2005, fusing North African beats, with sad and gentle western folk ballads, and a twist of rock. Born in Algeria in 1972, she later traveled to Paris, France to pursue a music career and has thus far released two prior CDs, <<Raoui>> and <<Deb>>.

She may be a newcomer to the western music scene, but Massi has officially become part of the new wave of North African music. At the time of her US breakthrough in October 2004, the New York Times described Massi as "irresistible."

Mesk Eli is not too different than her prior records, her songs still communicate a "nostalgia" for her homeland. She is commended for her ability to match bleak lyrics with subtle and increasingly varied settings. Massi has flamenco beats influencing her rhythms, and she also incorporates a Berber vocal in a song, serving as a reminder of her roots, and the history of the country. In some songs she is joined by a full Arab orchestra, in others she sings a duet.

Massi's official website, <http://souadmassi.artistes.universalmusic.fr/>, says that she has been in the music industry since the age of 17. She continues to make strides as an up and coming celebrity in the music scene.

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armed forces, strengthening political dialogue with the alliance, and exchanging scientific research.

The Algeria-NATO seminar assessed cooperation between Algeria and NATO. Many Algerian political and military officials were in attendance, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohamed Bedjaoui and the Ambassador of Algeria to Brussels, Halim Bentatallah.

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the costs of setting up the information infrastructures. The President said that the information society is a cohesive tool and not one that creates divide between countries.

President Bouteflika said that success for the countries would be to take a unified stance for a globally inclusive technology society. This solidarity will be beneficial in case of natural disasters, for economic assistance, for promoting human rights, and for bridging the gap between peoples.