

ALGERIA TODAY

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THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Algeria ended the past year with a positive assessment of its domestic and global agendas.

On the domestic front, 2005 marked the passage of a significant measure destined to reinforce the stability of the country and the appeasement of its society. Algerians voted massively in favor of a Draft Project for Peace and National Reconciliation, thus completing the agenda set forth by President Bouteflika. Today, the Algerian people feel better off than before and are reaping the fruit of a national policy aiming primarily at eradicating remnants of terrorism while concentrating on conducting successful political, economic and social reforms.

The Government's reform program has enjoyed significant progress. Foreign investments are on the rise and included a larger array of sectors in addition to hydrocarbons. Numerous contracts have been awarded in the housing sector to national and foreign firms. The country's economic performance and the management of its foreign debt earned it kudos from specialized international institutions. Furthermore, as exports register a significant rise, consumer goods imports have also increased noticeably in terms of volume and variety, thanks to the significant amount of foreign cash flowing into the State's coffers.

In the legislative arena, the People's National Assembly kept a full work

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SECRETARY RUMSFELD VISITS ALGERIA

Algeria praised for being "a very good partner and friend in the war on terrorism"



U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld arrived in Algeria on February 16, 2006, for what officials termed the first visit to the country by someone in his position. Accompanied by senior Pentagon officials, Secretary Rumsfeld was greeted at Algiers' Houari Boumediene Airport by Minister Delegate for National Defense Abdelmalek Guenaizia and other Algerian high officials. He later held talks with the Algerian Head of Government, Mr. Ahmed Ouyahia, before meeting with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

A press release made public by the U.S. Department of Defense's American Forces Information Service noted that Mr. Rumsfeld termed his meeting with the Algerian head of State "a thoroughly interesting and helpful visit" and added that "the United States values greatly our close cooperation in the counter-terrorism efforts" and that "we look forward to strengthening our military-to-military relationship and our cooperation in counter-terrorism." Commenting further, Mr. Rumsfeld added that "the United States and Algeria have a multifaceted relationship that involves political and economic as well as military-to-military cooperation." Mr. Rumsfeld said President Bouteflika had described for him how succeeding in

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ALGERIA HOSTED MEPI DELEGATION

\$9 Million for political and economic initiatives



A US delegation representing the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) visited Algeria for five days, starting Friday, February 10, 2006, to assess current development projects and to examine possibilities of reinforcing and widening cooperation between the two countries. Mr. David Mullenex, MEPI's Regional Coordinator said that the

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U.S. CONGRESS STAFFERS MEET WITH ALGERIAN AUTHORITIES

A delegation of United States Congress staffers visited Algeria for the first time on Saturday, January 21, 2006. This initiative was launched by the Embassy of Algeria in Washington, D.C. to strengthen relations between the People's National Assembly (APN) and the American Congress, and to reinforce cooperation and exchanges in various domains.

The visit gave the congressional delegation the opportunity to better understand how Algeria's government is structured, the role of the APN, and to learn firsthand of "the political and socio-economic progresses," said the President of Algeria's Nation's Council, Mr. Abdelkader Bensalah, who hosted the delegation.

The staffers met with the Speaker of the APN, Mr. Amar Saadani, who hosted them to a luncheon. They also had talks with the chairmen of different parliamentary groups, the Minister of Energy, Mr Chakib Khelil, the Minister for Parliamentary Relations, Mr. Abdelaziz Ziari, and the Chairman of the National Consultative Committee for the Promotion and the Protection of Human Rights, Mr. Farouk Ksentini, and with the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ramtane Lamamra.

After their visit to Algeria, the Congressional staffers were hosted by the Ambassador of Algeria to the
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USA, ALGERIA SIGN AGREEMENT ON SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY



A U.S. delegation headed by Under-Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Dr. Paula Dobriansky, made a two-day visit to Algeria Tuesday, January 17th, 2005 to sign a cooperation agreement in the areas of science and technology, with Algeria's Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Mr. Rachid Harraoubia.

The US delegation was comprised of Dr. Dobriansky, the US State Department's Head Counselor of the Bureau of Science and Technology Cooperation, Mr. Robert Senseney, the Director of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Elias Zerhouni, as well as various representatives of U.S. organizations affected by the agreement.

Dr. Dobriansky said that the agreement will "help Algerians and Americans to work together and resolve problems in science and technology." She said that a better understanding of the two peoples will result.

After the signing ceremony, Mr. Harraoubia expressed satisfaction and "immense pleasure" regarding the future exchanges in science and technology between the two governments. He described the signing as, "a strong moment in the evolution of the two countries' relations, a

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NCSL DELEGATION VISITS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

A U.S. delegation from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) spent one week in Algeria starting Saturday, January 21, 2006 to introduce new information technology in all legislative procedures and to modernize the operation of the People's National Assembly. According to the leader of the delegation, Representative Jeff Wentworth, a virtual library with a capacity of 450,000 books and other resources has been put in place.

The delegation evaluated the Assembly's accomplishments thus far and new projects for 2006-2007, and then convened with Assembly authorities to discuss deadlines and implementation.

The delegation was greeted by the President of the Assembly, Mr. Amar Saidani, and then had the opportunity to meet with government authorities as well as parliamentary groups. They also were present at the closing of the Fall session of the Assembly on Wednesday, January 25th, 2006.

The cooperation between the Assembly and the NCSL is a project under the United States Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) program.

FBI DIRECTOR REINFORCES SECURITY COOPERATION WITH ALGERIA

The Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mr. Robert S. Mueller, visited Algeria early February and held talks with law enforcement officials on counter-terrorism cooperation. According to the Algerian Minister of Justice, Mr. Tayeb Belaiz, Director Mueller's two-day visit included the conclusion of bilateral conventions in the legal and judicial fields between Algeria and the U.S.



Mr. Belaiz said that the FBI Director's visit highlights the reinforced and consolidated bilateral relations in security cooperation, especially in the fight against terrorism and organized crime. Mr. Mueller said that his meetings gave him the chance to understand the course of reform and justice administration in Algeria. He praised the developing cooperative relationship between the two countries and said that he hopes to see it develop further.

MINISTER BEDJAOUI ATTENDS UN REFORM MEETING IN SPAIN



Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mohammed Bedjaoui, participated at the United Nations Ministerial Meeting in Grenada, Spain, from January 26-28th, 2006. A statement issued by the ministry indicated that the meeting was devoted to reform processes but it also gave participants the opportunity to exchange views on issues of mutual interest, including terrorism, disarmament and economic development.

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U.S. has allotted \$9 million for political and economic initiatives in Algeria. He added that MEPI's goal is to supply Algeria with the necessary reform tools that will respect the country's culture, religion and politics, while promoting democracy.

The MEPI delegation met with the ministers of Justice and of Communication, and high officials from the People's National Assembly, the Nation's Council, as well as non-governmental organizations.

MEPI projects in Algeria address education, justice, media, women, youth, civil society etc.

ALGERIA ATTENDS NATO DIALOGUE



From February 8-9th, 2005, Mr. Abdelmalek Guenaizia, the Minister Delegate for National Defense, attended the first informal meeting of NATO defense ministers and countries participating in the Mediterranean Dialogue.

The meeting, which took place in Taormina, Italy, offered the Algerian delegation the opportunity to discuss various issues, including the fight against terrorism, modernization of equipment, dialogue between partners, stability and security. NATO officials said that Algeria is considered one of the most active countries.

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the fight against extremism and terrorism "is not a military matter alone, or even primarily". He added that "it's instructive for us to recognize that the struggle we're in is not unlike the struggle that the people of Algeria went through – that it takes a long, long time. That it takes patience. That it, as (President Bouteflika) pointed out, requires constantly adapting to the different circumstances as they evolve." "We have in them a good partner in the struggle against extremism", Mr. Rumsfeld said. "Certainly they are a thoughtful, constructive, moderate voice in this part of the world and have been for many, many years."

Speaking to reporters, the secretary also noted that Algeria is participating later this year in a NATO counterterrorism operation in the Mediterranean. In an interview to VOA English Service, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs, Theresa Whelan, said that "is typical of Algeria's active involvement in efforts to fight terrorism" and added that "the issue of terrorism really hit home for the Algerians, and I think they are trying to share their lessons learned with their neighbors so that their neighbors can avoid having similar problems in their countries." Secretary Whelan also noted that "Algeria (...) won the right to host the African Union's Counterterrorism Center for Excellence, which will host its first conference soon."

CISCO SYSTEMS OFFICE IN ALGERIA

E-governance Implementation Underway

As of January 24th, 2006, Cisco Systems, the world-wide leader in networking for the Internet, has a permanent office in Algeria, creating "Cisco Systems Algeria."

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United States, H.E. Amine Kherbi, and his wife to a dinner at his residence, on February 6. The dinner was another opportunity for the staffers to enjoy Algerian hospitality and to exchange views with the Ambassador on a trip that helped both to strengthen the bond between Algeria and the United States and to offer the U.S. delegation an in-depth look at Algeria, its institutions and its people.

DR. ELIAS ZERHOUNI LEADS TOP U.S. MEDICAL FACILITY

On Thursday, January 19th, an "effective" cooperation in the health sector was emphasized between the Minister of Health, Mr. Tou, and the National Institutes of Health delegation attending the signing of the Science and Technology Agreement between Algeria and the U.S. Their discussion focused on the development of training and re-enforcement of capacities for sanitation, epidemic surveillance, and battling bird flu. Dr. Elias Zerhouni, the Director of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, said that these points "will rapidly formalize" and be implemented.

Dr. Zerhouni, is heading an exchange called "Inter-activity," between Algerians and Americans through the Internet in the fields of medicine and science, enabling communication and inter-learning.

Personally chosen by President George W. Bush in 2002, Dr. Zerhouni oversees an institution with approximately 17,000 employees and a 28 billion-dollar budget. Before heading NIH, he was credited with numerous research and clinical breakthroughs, including developing imaging methods extensively used for diagnosing cancer and cardiovascular disease.

Dr. Zerhouni is the highest-ranking Algerian-American serving in the U.S. government. After graduating from the medical school of the University of Algiers, he furthered his studies in France, and then immigrated to America in 1975.

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relationship that in the past few years has sustained an intense exchange of ideas." Mr. Harroubia also said that the agreement will enrich Algeria's judicial framework concerning US relations in science and technology, adding that the signing will solidify the US-Algeria partnership and increase the ambitions of both peoples.

The agreement provides for collaboration opportunities between experts in the shared fields of science and technology, such as seismology, agriculture, environment, energy, space, health, information communication technology, biotechnology, and marine and maritime research. Pedagogical exchanges will be made between the two communities through joint venture projects.

Algeria's Minister of Health, Mr. Amar Tou, said that the main objective is to enforce partnerships between the countries' institutions and to consolidate their science and technology capacities because they will engender not only dense cooperation but improve human resources.

Dr. Dobriansky said the exchange of information will take place through exchange programs of science experts and students, bilateral seminars and meetings, and research projects involving both countries. In Spring 2006, NASA and Stanford University are expected to share models and equipment with Algerian scientists interested in the study of lightning.

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agenda, passing laws ranging from Law 05-1 of February 6, 2005, on the Prevention and Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism to Law 05-07 of April 28, 2005, on Hydrocarbons.

On the international front, Algeria has stepped up efforts to strengthen relations with its neighbors, partners and allies. It remains steadfast in combating transnational terrorism and in sharing its experience with other nations in this regard. It has actively demonstrated its commitment to regional and international peace and stability. Algeria has also actively demonstrated its support for the objectives of such regional and international organizations as the Arab League, the African Union and the United Nations, thus underscoring its responsibilities as a member and the essential contributions made by such fora.

In the area of US-Algerian relations, Algeria has worked hard at strengthening the already rich, diverse and friendly relations that tie it to the United States. In this respect, the number, frequency and levels of representation of delegations visiting both countries are a reflection of the intensity and closeness of US-Algerian relations and an indication of the willingness of both Governments to strengthen them even further.

A complete listing of acts passed by the Fifth Legislature (2002-2007) is available on the PNA website (www.apn-dz.org). The website is accessible in Arabic, French and English. Integral texts of law can be accessed and downloaded through the site.

PREPARATIONS UNDERWAY FOR A NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF CHAABI MUSIC

While most people are familiar with Algeria's *Rai* and *Andalous* music genres, *Chaabi* is also one of the most popular styles of music in the country. Having originated at the turn of the 20th century, Chaabi music is known for its popular lyrics and tunes that stress Algerian cultural heritage. It reconnects people with their roots and makes them appreciate their origins. Chaabi is often heard at weddings, festivals, and other celebrations.

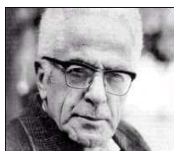
This year, Algeria is preparing for a National Chaabi Festival, scheduled to take place from October 6-12th, 2006. Applications for participation were sent out on February 15, 2006, to all interested artists in the country. The Director of the festival, Mr Abdelkadr Bendameche, said that he is especially hoping to see more talented youth participate.

Auditions will be held from April 12-14th in the cities of Annaba, Algiers, and Mostaganem. The best performers will make it to the finale at the Cultural Palace, Moufdi-Zakaria, in Algiers.

Requirements for participation in the festival are that one must have an elementary base in playing and in interpreting the music. The festival is open to all ages.

COMMEMORATION OF MOULOUD MAMMERI

Cultural centers celebrate Mammeri's legacy



This year marks the seventeenth year since anthropologist, historian, and linguist Mouloud Mammeri, passed away. Mr. Mammeri published work that was intellectual and aesthetic as well as harboring Socratic irony and humor.

The Tafrana and Tigjdit Cultural associations in the city of Larbaa-Nath-Iraten, are planning a two-day commemoration of Mr. Mammeri, from Thursday March 2 to Friday March 3rd, 2006, in the city's Cultural Center. There will be an exposition on the life of the author, an open forum for debate and discussion, as well as two theatrical performances.

Mr. Mammeri is most known for having exposed the sufferings endured by his people under colonialism. He was determined to preserve Algerian heritage and culture, especially the oral tales that had yet to be documented. Famous works include, *La Colline Oubliée*, *La Traversée*, *Le Sommeil du Juste*, as well as many ancient Berber poems.

NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF BEDOUI SINGING

Bedoui singers and poets gathered last week for a two-day reunion in a conference hall in the city of Tiaret. The festival not only reunited friends, but also gave life back to a genre of music that has slowly been fading in Algeria.

Bedoui artists came from all corners of the country, engaging in chants that chime rhythmically with a flute and tambourine, defining the *Bedoui* tradition.

Participants discussed the importance of organizing efforts throughout the country so that Bedoui music and poetry will live on as part of Algeria's traditions.

NEW EDITION OF ASSIA DJEBAR'S CLASSIC *OMBRE SULTANE* REPRINTED BY FRENCH PUBLISHER ALBIN MICHEL

A new edition of *Ombre Sultane*, by the renowned author and professor, Assia Djebbar, has just been completed by Albin Michel. The novel is about two Algerian women, Hajila and Isma, who discover that they are married to the same man. Ms. Djebbar describes their lifestyles, unveils their hidden thoughts, and describes their helpless and confused emotions as their lives unfold around them. Ms. Djebbar is the first person of North-African background to be elected to the prestigious *Académie Française*.

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