

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

13 December 2002

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information regarding potential strategic or tactical impact to the US Army and as such, should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available at <http://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil/>. The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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HOT ISSUES

Common Chemical 'Damages Sperm'

11 December – [BBC](#) reported a chemical used to preserve cosmetics and fragrances may cause damage to sperm in adult men. However, the scientists are unsure as to whether this damage could leave men infertile, or cause birth defects. Scientists from Harvard University have uncovered evidence that exposure to the chemical, one of a group known as the phthalates, may lead to damage to the genetic material of human sperm. Phthalates are used to make fragrances last longer and to soften plastics. The research is published in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives. [View Article](#)

Cutting Down on Smoking Won't Cut Death Risk

06 December – Reuters reported heavy smokers hoping to stave off respiratory illness or death by cutting down on the number of cigarettes they smoke may want to rethink their choice and quit altogether, according to new study findings from Denmark. Significantly reducing the number of cigarettes smoked did not appear to have any long-term benefit in terms of death risk compared to not cutting down at all, according to the report published in the December issue of the American Journal of Epidemiology. Heavy smokers who cut their cigarette intake by half saw no reduction in deaths from any cause during the study period. Quitters, on the other hand, had a 35% lower risk of death from all causes than those who continued to smoke heavily, while light smokers' death risk was 25% lower. The study is published in the American Journal Epidemiology (2002;156:994-1001). [View Article](#)

Dietary Advice Takes On Mediterranean Flavor

03 December – The New York Times reported on how the prevalent thought that a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet is most effective in warding off heart disease is being brought into question. A careful analysis of the evidence clearly shows that it is not a high-fat, low-carbohydrate diet that is protective. Rather, it is a diet like the one consumed by heart-healthy people along the Mediterranean: rich in vegetables and fruits, whole grains, nuts, unsaturated vegetable oils and protein derived from fish, beans and chicken, not red meat. "Compelling" evidence for this view was thoroughly reviewed last week in The Journal of the American Medical Association by nutrition and epidemiology experts at the Harvard School of Public Health, who have followed

tens of thousands of Americans for decades to uncover relationships between diet, habits and health. [View Article](#)

Herpes Vaccine Has Promise for Stemming Spread

04 December – World Health News reported a new Herpes vaccine has prevented infections in 74 percent of women participating in a vaccine study. The news of the vaccine came about shortly after a recent report stating if nothing was done to stop it, virtually half of all young women and 39% of all young men in America were projected to contract genital herpes by 2025. The new herpes vaccine, reported in the Nov. 21 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine, was tested on 1,867 persons who didn't have the genital herpes virus and 847 people who had neither genital herpes nor the virus that causes cold sores. All the subjects were in sexual relationships with someone who had genital herpes. The National Institutes announced a national trial for the herpes vaccine last month for Health. [View Article](#)

High Iron Level Increases Tuberculosis Risk

06 December – Reuters reported German scientists have raised hopes that new ways of fighting tuberculosis (TB) could be devised after showing that high levels of iron in the body boost the development of the deadly disease. A connection between the reproduction of the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* bacterium and levels of iron has long been suspected; in Africa, studies have shown that people who consume large amounts of iron are at greater risk from the disease. Now scientists say they have proved it. A study in the December issue of the Journal of Experimental Medicine reports the rate at which TB bacteria reproduce increases in an iron-rich culture. The authors state, "Iron as an important growth factor for tuberculosis pathogens can, in high concentrations, make the disease worse. And conversely, this opens up new approaches to more effective ways in which to treat the disease particularly in areas where iron overload and tuberculosis are present at the same time." TB kills approximately 2 million people a year worldwide. [View Article](#)

Laboratory Security and Emergency Response Guidance for Laboratories Working with Select Agents

06 December – the [CDC](#) released traditional biosafety guidelines, which emphasize laboratory controls that minimize worker injury and prevent environment contamination. The guidance published in this report incorporates criteria for laboratory security and emergency response. These guidelines are recommended for laboratories working with select biological agents and toxins, under biosafety levels 2, 3, and 4 conditions. [View Article](#) [View Guidelines](#)

New TB test 'Could Catch Carriers'

06 December – The [BBC](#) reported people who are carrying tuberculosis but who have not yet fallen ill with the disease could be identified using a new test. The current way of identifying people with TB, a skin test, is 100 years old and not completely reliable. However, scientists at the University of Oxford believe that they have found a way to detect when someone's immune system is battling TB. It looks directly at the way the immune system is working, and which type of cells are being produced. The presence of large numbers of white blood cells are a sign that the body is fighting an infection, and the test looks for signs of these. However, it can tell if the body has produced the cells as a response to TB bacteria as opposed to any other type of

infection. Over time, monitoring how the numbers of these cells change gives a clue as to how well the patient is keeping their TB suppressed. The test is needed as never before because TB is resurging in the developed world and the World Health Organization has declared TB a "global emergency". [View Article](#)

Safety Tips for Holiday Decorating

09 December - [MSNBC](#) reported on safety tips for holiday decorating. Emergency rooms treat about 12,500 people each year for falls, cuts and shocks related to holiday lights, decorations and Christmas trees, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. In addition to emergency room visits, there are also 11,600 candle-related fires each year, resulting in 150 deaths and \$173 million in property damage. The commission's holiday safety tips include: fresh or fire resistant trees, outside and inside lights and candles. Have a safe holiday! [View Article](#)

Varicella Outbreak Suggests Vaccine's Efficacy Wanes Over Time

11 December – Reuters reported in an outbreak of chickenpox in a New Hampshire day care center, investigators found that previous vaccination was only 44% protective. Even though few of the inoculated children experienced more than a mild case, the findings raise speculation that two doses of the vaccine may be required to provide adequate protection in very young children. The article is in the New England Journal of Medicine (2002;347:1909-1915,1962-1963). [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Increased Respiratory Syncytial Virus Activity in Ireland

05 December – Eurosurveillance reported Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is currently circulating in Ireland, England, France, the Netherlands, and the Czech Republic. In Ireland and the Netherlands, RSV detections are higher than usual while in England and France, RSV activity is normal for the time of the year. In Ireland, the number of RSV positive specimens from hospital respiratory specimens referred to the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) has increased substantially since 1 October 2002, compared to previous seasons. The NVRL detected 18 and 58 RSV positive specimens during October and November 2002, respectively: the highest numbers ever recorded for these months. It is estimated that this epidemic may peak in December. [View Article](#)

Malaria Epidemic Threatens Burundi

05 December – MSF reported the Government of Burundi has declared a malaria epidemic in Ngozi and Gitega, two of the country's 16 provinces, as registered cases exceed the emergency threshold. Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) is monitoring rising malaria levels in two other provinces. In addition, there is a malnutrition problem in the same area as the epidemic, which will increase the vulnerability of the population. [View Article](#)

South Africa Hit by Another Anthrax Outbreak

06 December – ProMed reported another case of the outbreak of anthrax has been reported in the North West province of South Africa. The outbreak of the deadly disease is the third to be reported in less than 2 months around villages near the provincial capital Mafikeng. The first case of the outbreak was reported early last month in Ramatlabama village near the Botswana and South African border post. This time around, it has struck the villages of Dibono and Disaneng. Several people have been treated at the provincial hospital for exposure to Anthrax, while some livestock have also died. State veterinary officials have been deployed to 11 villages, to start vaccinating thousands of animals. However, the South African meat exports have not as yet been affected. Farmers have already been served with quarantine notices, which forbid them to sell or move their stock during the next 2 months. [View Article](#)

Uganda: 8 Children Die in Measles Epidemic

05 December – AllAfrica.com reported an outbreak of measles in Mulama village, Magada Sub-county has left eight children dead and 40 others bed-ridden. Iganga Acting Director of Health Services, Dr. David Muwanguzi blamed the epidemic in the past few weeks on parents who shun the immunization of children. Medical sources told The Monitor that most parents have started withdrawing their children from school in fear of the disease. Muwanguzi said a massive immunization against measles would be conducted in Magada sub-county and the neighboring Bulange and Ivukula Sub-counties. He urged the People to turn up in big numbers for the exercise to have the problem curtailed. [View Article](#)

Uganda: Kampala City Council Warns of Cholera Outbreak

09 December – AllAfrica.com reported there is a cholera outbreak in Kampala, the director of district health services has warned. A 06 December press release from the public health department of the Kampala City Council (KCC) said that seven cases had been reported from Kitaka Zone, Nateete Parish. By 09 December the outbreak had reached worrying proportions with the disease spreading to Wakiso district. The Kampala district director of health services, Dr. Mishack Mubiru, said the epidemic had also spread to Bugolobi, a city suburb in Mutungo Parish, Nakawa division. Mubiru announced that plans were underway to establish a cholera treatment centre in Mulago hospital to cater for the increasing number of patients and to avoid cross infection. [View 06 December Article](#) [View 09 December Article](#)

Zimbabwe: Clean Water Runs Out

05 December – AllAfrica.com reported the greater Harare area of Zimbabwe has only about three days' supply of purified water, posing a serious health threat to the more than four million residents of the capital. The crisis follows the city council's failure to acquire two chemicals necessary in the purification process, despite determined efforts. According to a source in the council's department of works, the chemicals are lime and ecol 2,000, which are imported. Harare supplies water to Chitungwiza, Epworth, Norton and Ruwa. The Daily News has established that the city paid a local lime supplier US \$140,000 in September for 1,000 tons of the chemical, but the company had allegedly supplied less than half the amount paid for. The sources claimed the supply of lime had been very erratic and only a small part of the consignment had been received. But the company's managing director, MacDonald Chapfika, exonerated his firm. While he said his company provided two truckloads of lime a week, he

conceded that this was not enough, but this was because the city lacked sufficient storage facilities, he said. Instead, he blamed the water supply problem on the city's piping system. In addition, the Harare City Council, submitted an application to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe for the equivalent of \$64 million to import 160 tons of ecol 2,000, but nothing has materialized yet. It could not be established yesterday when the application was made and why it had not yet been processed. [View Article](#)

USCENTCOM

250 U.S. Military in Kuwait Sickened

01 December – ABC News reported 250 U.S. military personnel have been treated for food poisoning after eating at a camp south of Kuwait City, and two of them are hospitalized. The Army soldiers, Navy sailors and Marines were treated Monday for symptoms of food poisoning at the Oraifijan installation and "released back to work within 24 hours," Sgt. First Class David Dismukes said. "We don't know at this point what it is," Dismukes told The Associated Press, declining to say if terrorism was suspected. He said laboratory test results were pending. U.S. contractor Brown and Root provides food to the facility, about 35 miles south of Kuwait City. [View Report](#)

New Clues on Iraq's Smallpox Threat

04 December – NBC News reported a CIA informant said a Russian scientist, Nelja Maltseva, who died two years ago, brought smallpox to Iraq. She is known to have visited Iraq in 1972. But now the CIA informant says she went back in 1990 to help Saddam's bioterror experts. On Wednesday, Maltseva's former colleagues strongly denied that she helped Saddam in any way. "She had not been in Iraq at that time. She could not take this virus," said Russian scientist Svetlana Marennikova. What is known is that Maltseva studied the rare smallpox strain after an Asian epidemic in 1971. American scientists say the outbreak was caused by an accident at a nearby Soviet weapons lab, which was experimenting with smallpox. The CIA thought the information was important enough to brief President Bush. But aides say Bush did not press Russia's President Vladimir Putin about the smallpox experiments when they met in St. Petersburg last month, because even Putin probably can't get his military to admit what they did. "I don't know what the Russians might have in their inventory. We are in constant contact with the Russians on this issue," said Secretary of State Colin Powell. [View Article](#)

Typhoid Fever - Tajikistan

06 December – ProMed reported The Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) international organization has reported an outbreak of typhoid fever in the area of Murghob of Tajikistan. The center of the outbreak was the village of Sarikinjar. So far, 51 cases of typhoid fever have been reported. Doctors report that typhoid fever is rapidly breaking out in this cold area. Doctors say that the main reason for the spread of the disease is muddy drinking water. Supplying the people with clear water and medicaments, MSF are doing their utmost to prevent the spread of the lethal disease in mountainous Murghob. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

AMA Wants Liability Protections Before Smallpox Vaccinations Start

12 December – Reuters reported the AMA's House of Delegates voted 10 December to specifically request initiation of a federal liability program before starting vaccinations. The Homeland Security Act, which was approved by Congress and signed by President Bush last month, includes the liability protections but those coverages don't take effect until January 24, said AMA Trustee Timothy Flaherty. The AMA House of Delegates bundled the liability request into a series of smallpox-related actions and sent them all to the AMA's board of trustees with a directive to take any necessary action to keep the AMA in the loop as smallpox policies take shape and broaden. [View Article](#)

CDC Seeks to Expand VIG Supply

05 December - [CIDRAP](#) News reported as the likelihood of a large-scale smallpox vaccination program grows, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is seeking to expand the government's limited supply of vaccinia immune globulin (VIG), the mainstay of treatment for severe reactions to the vaccine. Information on the CDC's Web site says the agency has 700 doses of VIG on hand, enough to treat the reactions that would be expected if 4 million to 6 million people were vaccinated. With two companies now under contract to produce more VIG for the federal government, the CDC says it expects to have about 30,000 doses by the end of 2003. Presently, the supply could run short if the vaccination program were rapidly expanded to all healthcare workers and emergency personnel or to the general population. [View Article](#)

Chicken, Bacteria & Antibiotics

11 December - CBS News reported a consumer magazine found harmful bacteria, much of it drug resistant, in almost half the chickens it bought from stores around the country. *Campylobacter* was found in 42 percent of 484 fresh broiler chickens tested for a survey in the January issue of Consumer Reports. The magazine said recently that *Salmonella* was found on 12 percent of the chickens. Both organisms can cause diarrhea, fever, abdominal pain and sometimes death. The report highlighted that 90 percent of the *Campylobacter* samples and 34 percent of the *Salmonella* resisted treatment by antibiotics, meaning sick people would be harder to treat and stay sick longer. The FDA oversees animal pharmaceuticals. It proposed guidelines in September for drug makers to rely on when determining whether new animal drugs would increase the problem of drug-resistant bacteria. [View Article](#)

FDA'S Foods Advisory Committee Discusses Acrylamide in Food

04 December – The [FDA](#) released exploratory data on acrylamide levels found in a variety of foods that will be reviewed with other information by the Contaminants and Natural Toxicants Subcommittee of the Food Advisory Committee. The findings released are generally similar to the results made available last September at a public meeting FDA held to unveil its draft action plan for acrylamide. FDA continues to find a wide variety of acrylamide levels in foods. The data show that some foods have very little or no acrylamide present, while test results from other foods continue to confirm the presence of acrylamide. The FDA is also releasing new data

showing a correlation between acrylamide levels and the length of time the food is cooked and the temperature at which the food is cooked. [View Article](#)

FDA to Restrict Some Prescription Drug Imports

10 December - Reuters Health reported The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said that it has taken steps to prevent the importation of a number of prescription drugs that are marketed in the US under special safety controls. The FDA said that it is also urging consumers not to buy the drugs on the Internet. "Although these drugs have important benefits for many patients, they have serious known risks and so are available in the US only under specially created safety controls," the FDA said. The drugs include Roche's acne drug Accutane (isotretinoin), which is sold in the US under a program designed to prevent its use by pregnant women, and GlaxoSmithKline's irritable bowel syndrome drug Lotronex (alosetron), which was pulled off the US market several years ago due to a deadly side effect and recently reintroduced under a strict risk-management program. Those drugs and eight others have been added to an existing FDA Import Alert in order to bring them to the attention of FDA field personnel, who have been advised to refuse them admission into the US, the agency said. In addition, the alert means that US Customs will notify the FDA of any attempted importation. Along with Accutane and Lotronex, the drugs that have been added to the list are Cephalon's cancer-pain therapy Actiq (fentanyl citrate), Novartis' schizophrenia treatment Clozaril (clozapine), Danco's early-abortion drug Mifeprex (mifepristone), Celgene's leprosy drug Thalomid (thalidomide), Orphan Medical's narcolepsy therapy Xyrem (sodium oxybate), Actelion's hypertension drug Tracleer (bosentan), and two Pfizer drugs: the cardiac arrhythmia therapy Tikosyn (dofetilide) and the antibiotic Trovan (trovafloxacin mesylate). [View Article](#) [View FDA Report](#)

Influenza Outbreak and Response Preparedness in the Air National Guard: Abstract

06 December - [DoD-GEIS](#) published the following abstract: A 1997 influenza outbreak with a high case fatality rate reminded public health officials of the serious nature of this disease. Civilian authorities worldwide have initiated planning in preparation for another pandemic, possibly of the magnitude observed in 1918. Military agencies have also begun pandemic preparation. However, planning for influenza outbreaks in the Air National Guard (ANG) has not received a high priority. Through interviews and document reviews, we examined the current policies and procedures of the ANG in relation to influenza surveillance, outbreak response, vaccination, and use of antiviral drugs. Deployment and demographic data were studied and indicated ANG populations were at risk for infection with and dissemination of novel influenza strains. Pandemic planning in the ANG must be given a higher priority, to include initiating laboratory-based surveillance, enhancing communication and coordination with other public health authorities, and considering the potential use of antiviral drugs. Article citation: Likos AM, Nevill J, Gaydos JC. Influenza outbreak and response preparedness in the Air National Guard. *Mil Med.* 2002; 107(11): 929-933. [View Article](#)

Southern California First to Ban Cleaning Solvent

06 December – ABC News reported Southern California air quality officials voted to impose the nation's first ban of the most commonly used dry cleaning solvent because of health concerns. Dry cleaning businesses would have to stop using perchloroethylene, known as perc, by the year 2020. The South Coast Air Quality Management District also approved \$2 million in grants

to help dry cleaners switch to other chemicals. Scientists estimate the cancer risk posed by long-term exposure to perc is between 20 and 140 in 1 million. Studies have linked the compound to cancers of the lung, cervix, esophagus and bladder in dry cleaning workers. [View Article](#)

The Scoop on Snow Shoveling Safety

The University of North Dakota has great tips for shoveling snow safely. Among many safety tips, the authors suggest a warm-up period, keeping the shovel close to the body, and reminders to bend the knees and keep the back straight. [View Safety Tips](#)

US Flu Season Starts Slow

05 December – The CDC reported influenza activity has been low in the United States this season, but is expected to increase in the coming weeks and months. A few states have experienced regional activity. There is plenty of vaccine this year and those who have not yet been vaccinated are encouraged to do so before influenza activity increases. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

Alarm Bells on Hospital Infections in Tasmania

06 December – NEWS.com.au reported there is a rise in infections acquired in Tasmanian public hospitals that needs to be explained. Cases of bacteremia increased in 2001-02 by about 30% at the Royal Hobart Hospital and 20 per cent at the North-West General Hospital. The rate dropped slightly at Launceston General Hospital after a 10-fold rise in 2000-2001 from 1999-2000. Of about 45,000 RHH in-patients, just under 0.5 per cent had the blood infection. While most staph infections are easily treated, the MRSA form is among a worldwide wave of germs resistant to antibiotics because of long-term over-use. [View Article](#)

Botulism Eyed as Cause for Deaths of Taiwanese Spoonbills

11 December – ProMed reported a growing number of the endangered black-faced spoonbills in a reserve in southern Taiwan died from what is now thought to be botulism contracted by eating dead fish. So far, 37 of the rare birds that spend their winter in Taiwan had died, while 28 were still ill. Autopsies performed on 9 of the dead birds showed that they had not died from exposure to the cold or other natural causes. Official are awaiting laboratory confirmation. [View Article](#)

Guam Declared Disaster Area

09 December – [BBC](#) News reported the American Pacific territory of Guam was declared a disaster area, after it was struck by a typhoon on 08 December. Typhoon Pongsona, with winds of up to 150 mph caused extensive structural damage across the island. Electricity, water and telephones were cut off, and flights and ferries were cancelled. Six people were reported missing, according to local media sources. About 2,300 people were staying in emergency

shelters. Reports spoke of boats and cars scattered across the main thoroughfare, and roads made impassable. The US weather service on the island was unable to monitor the typhoon because winds had smashed its equipment. Early forecasts had accurately predicted the 48km to 56km wide eye of the storm would pass directly over Guam. [View Article](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Brazil - 26 Killed, 50 Missing in Mudslides

10 December – The Associated Press reported mudslides, triggered by torrential rains, have killed at least 26 people in a coastal city in Brazil, a firefighter said. The mudslides struck eight neighborhoods in Angra dos Reis, 160km west of Rio de Janeiro, burying several houses, said firefighter Soldado Paulina. Most of the houses were little more than shacks built precariously on hillsides in the city of 60,000 overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. About 50 people were reported missing. Rescue operations were made harder by mudslides blocking major access roads in the area, Paulina said. While the rains, which began last night, have stopped, there is still fear of more mudslides. [View Article](#)

Chile - Study Ties Chili Pepper to Gallbladder Cancer Risk

09 December – Reuters reported poverty and eating lots of red chili pepper might increase a person's risk of gallbladder cancer, new study findings from Chile suggest. Since the 1970s, cancer experts have tracked a steady rise in the rate of gallbladder cancer among Chileans, who now have the world's highest rate of death from the disease. Lead author, Dr. Ivan Serra of the University of Chile said, "Patients with gallbladder cancer differed from matched controls by exhibiting lower socioeconomic levels, having a much longer history of gallstone disease and presenting a dietary pattern characterized by high red chili pepper consumption and low fresh fruit intake." Poverty and high chili pepper consumption were associated with a sixfold and threefold increase in gallbladder cancer, respectively, the study indicates. The study is published in the International Journal of Cancer (2002;102:407-411). [View Article](#)

Foot and Mouth Disease - Venezuela

05 December – ProMed reported an outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD) virus type A in cattle was detected in the Presidente Paez Parish, Alberto Adriani municipality of Venezuela. The diagnosis has been made on clinical and laboratory grounds. 194 cases have been identified among 680 susceptible cattle. Control measures include: surveillance and epidemiological alert in Aragua state, immediate notification of this event to the neighboring states, notification to the state breeder associations, quarantine of the affected establishment, movement restriction of personnel of the affected establishment, biosecurity measures, isolation and treatment of sick animals, and ring vaccination. [View Article](#)

Yellow Fever Vaccination Required For Travel to and from Easter Island

11 December – ProMed reported the Government of Chile declared obligatory vaccination against yellow fever for all persons from areas where the disease is endemic. The same

document (Decree No. 291) declares yellow fever vaccination obligatory for all persons returning from or traveling by any means to Easter Island. This administrative resolution was taken because of the presence of *Aedes aegypti* in the island. There have been no cases of yellow fever reported in Easter Island but there have been cases of dengue fever, with the *Aedes* mosquito being the vector. [View Article](#)

Please contact the below-listed POC for suggested improvements and/or comments regarding this report. This report is also available on the USACHPPM website at <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/Hiupdate/>.

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ACRONYMS

AFMIC - Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center
BBC – British Broadcasting Company
BMJ – British Medical Journal
BSE – Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
CIDRAP – Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy
CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CNN – Cable News Network
CSR – Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response – A branch of the WHO
DoD/GEIS – Department of Defense/Global Emerging Infections System
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
FDA – Food and Drug Administration
IRIN - Integrated Regional Information Networks, part of the [UN](#) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
MMWR – Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report
MSNBC – Microsoft National Broadcasting Company
NASA – National Aeronautic and Space Association
NIH – National Institute of Health
NIOSH- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
VOA-Voice of America
WHO – World Health Organization