

Bush plugs disease funds; denies new bases

by UPI

ACCRA, Ghana - U.S. President George W. Bush Wednesday announced a new orphaned diseases initiative and sought to dispel concern about a U.S. military presence in Africa. Bush, speaking during a news conference with Ghana President John Agyekum Kufuor in Accra, said the United States would make available \$350 million over five years to target neglected tropical diseases such as hookworm or river blindness. Also, the United States plans to specify nearly \$17 million this year to Ghana to fight malaria.

"This is all part of our initiative -- whether it be on HIV/AIDS or malaria," Bush said, "to help save lives." Concerning the U.S. Africa Command, Bush said it was a command structure aimed at helping provide military assistance to African nations so they can better respond to conflicts. "(The) whole purpose of AFRICOM is to help leaders deal with African problems," he said, adding the United States isn't considering adding new bases. "In other words, the purpose of this is not to add military bases," Bush said. "I know there's rumors in Ghana. (As) we say in Texas, that's bull." Bush, however, wouldn't rule out developing "some kind of office somewhere in Africa. We haven't made our minds up."

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