

Fiftieth Anniversary

Posted on [September 12, 2011](#) by [bhillenbrand](#) | [3 comments](#)

It's Nearly Time

Preparations for Peace Corps' 50th Anniversary Party are all but finished. Have you signed up for all the events?

by **Barry Hillenbrand (Debre Marcos 63-65)**

It's September. This is the month. It's less than two weeks until Peace Corps' big 50th anniversary party in Washington. We'd like to bring you up to date on preparations and remind you that if you have not purchased tickets for the E&E RPCVs events for the September 23-25 weekend, TODAY is the day to do it.

The folks organizing the events need to confirm the numbers of people attending so they can order enough injera-and-wat for the dinner and secure plenty of chairs and breakfast fixings for the Saturday morning meeting. Also those organizing reunions of training group or towns need a head count for caterers and restaurants. **SO TICKET SALES FOR EVENTS WILL CLOSE ON SEPTEMBER 16.** You MUST sign up by the 16th or you risk missing the programs in Washington.

Here's where you can purchase your tickets for the main events:



READY TO PARTY The Ethiopian Embassy in Washington

SOLD OUT ~~The reception/buffet dinner at the Ethiopian Embassy~~, Friday, September 23, 6 to 9 p.m. **No tickets will be sold at the door.**

SOLD OUT ~~The Saturday morning E&E RPCVs Program~~, at the Marriott on Saturday, September 24, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. will include a continental breakfast and a long and varied group of speakers, presentations. See below for a detailed updated schedule.

The good and exciting news is that lots of RPCVs who served in Ethiopia and Eritrea are heading to Washington for the anniversary celebration. We are expecting a full house for the special Ethiopia and Eritrea RPCV events at the Crystal City Marriott and the Ethiopian Embassy. (We tried to get an Eritrean event scheduled, but never got beyond polite conversations with some Eritrean embassy officials.) So far more than 260 RPCVs and their guests have signed up for the Ethiopian Embassy reception/buffet dinner on Friday, September 23rd. At last count nearly 200 people will be attending the Saturday morning program at the Marriott. While we tried to get big venues for these events, space is limited and we will have to close registration, so sign up TODAY.

E&E RPCV president **Marian Beil** (Debre Berhan 62-64) is ankle deep into the preparation of the programs and events. It's all coming together nicely. In Washington **Judy Smith** (Asmara 63-65) and **Gigi Ott Wietecha** (Makele; Dessie 63-65) — who negotiated out great arrangements with the hotel — are working with the Embassy on setting up the Friday dinner and reception. Marian, from her base in Oakland, arranged a spiffy sound system for the Ethiopian music program that evening that will feature RPCV musician **Charlie Sutton** (Addis 66-68). **LaDena Schnapper** (Dessie, Awassa 63-66) will be using that system as she demonstrates an Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony.

SATURDAY PROGRAM — POTOMAC BALLROOM

Nancy Horn (Addis 66-68) has rounded up speakers, experts and even a telephone link from Addis to allow us to hear directly from Peace Corps/Ethiopia Country Director **Diallo Nwando**, who will update us on what Peace Corps is doing in Ethiopia. Nancy has lined up an impressive program. It's still being fine-tuned and may change a bit, but here's the present engaging line-up:

- 8:00-8:15 – Welcome, E&E RPCVs president Marian Haley Beil
- 8:15-8:45 – Update on Health and Education in Ethiopia by **Sean Tate** (Kombolcha 66-68), Nancy Horn, and a recently returned PCV who has worked in health/HIV/AIDS.
- 8:45-9:30 – Live Update on Peace Corps activities in Ethiopia from Diallo Nwando, current Peace Corps Director in Addis
- 9:30 – 10:30 – Current involvement of E&E Projects: **Randy Marcus** (Asella 66-68), **Karen Blanchard** (Asella 66-68), et al.; **Neal Sobania** (Addis 68-72); **Haskell Ward** (Nazareth 63-65); **Gwen Williams** (Makele 63-65) – 12 minutes each; **Janet Lee** (Emdeber 74-76), **John Stauffer** (Adi Caieh 66-68), **Lee Plate** (Addis 66-69) and **Nancy Horn** – 2 minutes each. Comments and reports will be welcomed from the floor during an open mike segment.
- 10:30-10:45 – BREAK
- 10:45 – 11:00 – **Mike McCaskey** (Fiche 65-67) will show and comment on recent pictures taken in Ethiopia
- 11:00 – 11:30 – Country Update on politics and economy, former U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, **David Shinn**
- 11:30 – 12:00 – Country Update, Congressman (D- CA) and RPCV **John Garamendi** (Metu 66-68) who recently visited Ethiopia.
- 12:00-1:00 – Legacy Program Update, Leo Cecchini
- 1:00-2:00 – Peace Corps Authors talk about their books: **Dan Close** (Bekoji 66-68), **Ron Peterson** (Nekempte, Dessie 73-75), **Ted Vestal** (Ethiopia staff 64-66) and **Rob Albritton** (Harar, Asmara 63-65)

TRAINING GROUP REUNIONS

A series of reunions of training groups have been firmly scheduled. They include:

Ethiopia I will have a get together in the hotel pub — BELL20 Tavern — for food and drink right after the Morning Session ends, about 1 pm. Arranged by Leo Cecchini. This event will include the sharing of fond memories of staff member Ed Corboy who died recently.

Ethiopia II will have a pool side reunion, Saturday 3-5 p.m, at the Marriott. About 50 people have already signed up so far. You can purchase tickets and view the names of those already signed up at

<http://ethi2-happy-hour.eventbrite.com/>

The Ethiopia II group is also planning a dinner Saturday evening at 6:30 p.m. at Haar Mesob, an Ethiopian restaurant near the Marriott for those passing on the NPCA Gala. For those Ethie IIs interested in attending, please send an email to: EthieTwo@gmail.com by September 20th to sign up. Space is limited, so sign up now.

Ethiopia III will get together on Saturday after the Morning Session of E&E RPCVs. Dianne & Al Brandhorsts plus Betty McLaughlin Hagberg are organizing a lunch meeting (\$30.00) of fellow Ethiopia III's and guests at *Cucina Vivace*. See details and payment information at our web site: <http://darrel-betty-hagberg.com/Ethiopia3/Ethiopia3.html> or email us at: dbrandhorst@yahoo.com

For those of you who may have missed it, a full schedule of events during the 50th Anniversary weekend can be found by clicking on "50th Schedule" in the menu bar at the top of the page of the HERALD.

NEW TOUR OF MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART

Judy Smith (Asmara 1963-65) is conducting a tour of the Smithsonian's Museum of African Art — where she is a docent — for E&E RPCVs on Friday morning at 10 a.m. Please take the Metro from the Marriott to the Smithsonian stop. Judy will meet you in the entrance. The tour will be one hour. There is a small Ethiopian display with two paintings, but the main exhibit is a newly opened show of art from Central Nigeria.

HOSPITALITY ROOM

The Virginia Room on the 2nd floor of the hotel will be our Hospitality Room. It will open on Thursday afternoon. Name tags can be picked up there — then at the Embassy event and the Saturday Program. If you have photos to show, there will be a TV with DVD player available. Bring snacks, drinks to share.

And there will be the Silent Auction!

SILENT AUCTION

There are more than 100 items up for bid in the silent auction. Because all items have been donated, all proceeds from the auction will go to supporting the current RPCV Legacy Program projects. You can view the items and learn how to make bids now by clicking on "AUCTION" at the top of this page in the menu bar.

The real life silent auction will be set up in the Hospitality Room of the hotel. Bidding ends Saturday evening, and winning bids will be announced.

Bid early, bid often, and bring your checkbook.

MORE DETAILS

For other details about the 50th, click on "Fiftieth Anniversary" in the right column under "Categories" on any page and read all articles we've published on this topic.

PCVs in Ethiopia

Posted on [September 12, 2011](#) by [bhillenbrand](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

Peace Corps Teachers Are Back

A newly minted batch of PCVs include teachers who will teach and mentor teachers.

In August on the grounds of the American Embassy in Addis Ababa, 69 new PCVs were sworn in by U.S. Ambassador Donald Booth. Thirty-five of those PCVs will be working in education, a return to the task Peace Corps took up when it first came to Ethiopia in 1962. These new teachers will not be working in Ethiopia's primary or secondary schools, says Nwando Diallo, Peace Corps Country Director in Ethiopia. They will be "part of a broader effort between USAID, Peace Corps and the Ministry of Education to strengthen the English language learning/speaking/reading culture in Ethiopia via the strengthening of English Language teachers. Essentially, they will be Teacher Trainers/Mentors." These new Volunteers will work in Ethiopia's Colleges of Teacher Education and as advisors to teachers working in primary and secondary schools.



SAYING IT IN OROMIFA: a new PCV speaks; Ambassador Booth and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hailemariam listen at swearing in ceremony

The remaining 34 Volunteers sworn in at the ceremony will be working in projects to combat HIV/AIDS. Since Peace Corps returned to Ethiopia in 2007 most of the PCVs have worked in health projects funded in part by USAID. They worked in projects designed to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS, care and support of victims and services to help orphans and vulnerable children. In December 2010 31 PVCs were sworn in to work in environmental projects.

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Travels

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Coming Full Circle

A visit with the President of Ethiopia in Emperor Haile Salassie's old palace brings back memories of an earlier era — and a charming conversation

by Haskell Ward (Nazareth 63-65)

In early September in my capacity as a member of the national Board of Directors of the American Cancer Society I participated in the First Global Summit on Women's Cancer in Africa held in Addis. At the end of the conference five of us met with Girme Wolde-Giorgis, the President of Ethiopia, to deliver a copy of the conference declaration and to thank the Ethiopian government and people for their support of the meeting. The American Cancer Society was a leading partner at this Addis Conference which was organized by the Princess Nikky Foundation. Along with Princess Nikky Onyeri of Nigeria, I was a spokesperson for the visit with the President.



DO YOU SPEAK AMHARIC? Haskell Ward and President Girme Wolde Giogis

This was my first visit inside the palace grounds since 1973 when I participated in a luncheon Emperor Haile Selassie hosted for the International Association of Africanists. It was most likely one of the last large gatherings before his overthrow the next year. That earlier meeting was held in the Palace's large Grand Ballroom, the room where our Peace Corps group, Ethiopia II, first met the Emperor in 1963 when he received us at the beginning of our tour as PCVs.

Our meeting with the Ethiopian President was held in what was once the Emperor's main office where he conducted business with his ministers and other non-ceremonial visitors. After we were led into the office by the Chief of Protocol, Princess Nikky spoke first, then I followed. The President was very surprised and amused when I spoke to him in Amharic. I told him that I had served as an English

teacher in Nazareth 48 years ago at the Atse Gelawdios Secondary School. The President interrupted me to say that the Peace Corps had made a great contribution to Ethiopia and had been a major catalyst in the modernization of the country. He indicated that he had great admiration for Sargent Shriver and was saddened to hear of his death. He also noted that the Peace Corps is now back in the country.

I thanked the President for the impact that Ethiopia and its people had had on my life that I now appreciate even more as I grow older. When he ask how old I was, I replied that I would be 72 on my next birthday. At that he said, "You are still young. I wonder if you know how old I am?" I said I would be afraid to guess. "I am 87!"

The President is a very large man and during our photo session said that his legs made it difficult for him to stand. Though somewhat disabled, he is still mentally very alert. I told him that we were going to celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Peace Corps' founding at the end of this month in Washington, and that those of us who had served in Ethiopia would have dinner at the Ethiopian embassy. He said that his ambassador to the U.S. was in Addis then.

We spoke of the drought in Somalia and a number of other issues, and he acknowledged that the cancer burden was a major issue confronting his country. He thanked the American Cancer Society for supporting efforts to address it.

The president has a sharp mind and wit and a broad set of interests. He asked Princess Nikky how it was that she was a princess even though Nigeria had no king. When a delegate from South Africa identified herself as the representative of that country's First Lady, he asked "Which one?" She said that in fact she represented two of President Zuma's four wives. He asked the Uganda representative what "our brother Isaias" Afwerki of Eritrea had discussed with Ugandan President Yowerki Museveni during Isaias' visit to Uganda the previous week.

Our courtesy call was unrushed and very informal. We finally took our leave. The grounds of the palace looked quite clean and the President told us that the main Palace building itself was under renovation. My meeting with the Ethiopian President completes a circle of sorts. It reminds me also of why I decided to devote my life to addressing some of the continent's problems which were illuminated to me first — and in the clearest terms — in this country.

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News of Ethiopia

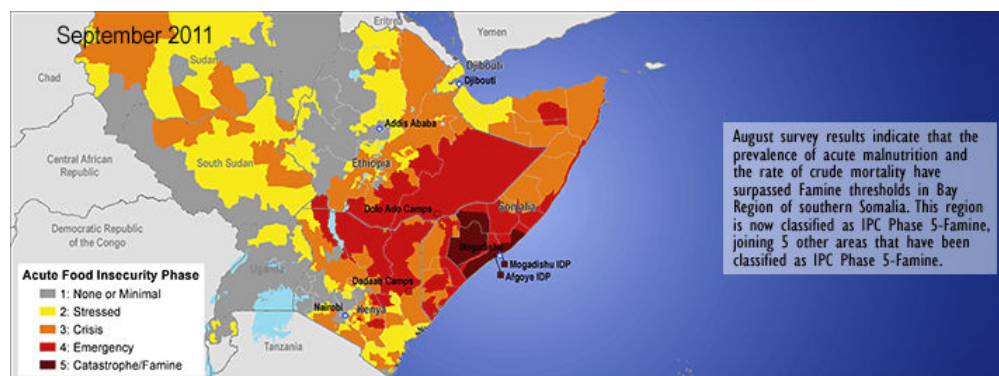
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News of Ethiopia

compiled by **Barry Hillenbrand**

ETHIOPIA'S FAMINE AND REFUGEE PROBLEM

Along with the rest of the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is suffering from the effects of the worst famine to strike the region in 60 years. The famine is most severe in Somalia, but it has reached into the southern areas of Ethiopia. While the famine in southern Somalia has grabbed headlines, experts and aid workers say that southern Ethiopia is teetering on the brink of a food crisis. The Ethiopian government agrees that 250,000 people need food aid in the southern part of the country. But aid organization and agricultural officials say the number of people who need emergency food aid in southern Ethiopia is bigger, around 700,000. Maps, including the one below, released by the Famine Early Warning Network, a joint venture of USAID, the UN, and other agencies, show critical famine (the dark red areas on the map below) in several areas of southern Somalia, but less serious drought in the southern regions of Ethiopia. In early September, Ethiopia imported 300,00 tons of wheat to build up grain reserves, and is seeking more aid from the international community.



However Ethiopia suffers from another problem caused by the famine: a vast influx of refugees from Somalia who walk across the dessert in search of food. They are arriving in large numbers in camps in southern Ethiopia where international relief agencies are scrambling to house and feed them. Ethiopia is host to over 260,000 refugees out of which some 180,000 are Somalis. This figure includes over 41,600 Somali refugees in the three Jijiga area camps as well as an estimated 18,500 others who have recently crossed into Ethiopia through the Gode area. The other refugee groups flowing into the country include over 50,000 Eritreans and some 26,000 Sudanese, who include recent arrivals of about 500 from Abiye and South Kordofan in Sudan.



WATER AT LAST Somali refugees in Hiloweyn camp near Dolo Ado, southern Ethiopia

According to the United Nations, the number of refugees in four camps in the Dollo Ado area of Ethiopia has now crossed the 120,000 mark. Almost 80,000 Somalis have arrived this year alone — the majority crossing the border in June and July. The large influx prompted UNHCR and the Government to open two new camps in June and August while land for the fifth camp has been identified. It could be used to house some 18,000 Somali refugees who have crossed into Ethiopia further north along the border in the Gode region. Lately, there has been a significant drop in the number of new arrivals: from a peak of over 2,000 refugees a day in June/July to 300 a day in August.

The state of health of those arriving in Dollo Ado continues to be extremely poor. An assessment of mortality in one of four refugee camps at the Dollo Ado complex has found that death rates have reached alarming levels among new arrivals. Since the Kobe refugee camp opened in June, an average of 10 children under the age of five have died every day. While malnutrition is the leading cause of the high mortality, suspected measles is compounding the problem. Across all Dollo Ado sites the UNHCR have seen 150 cases of suspected measles and 11 related deaths. The combination of disease and malnutrition is what has caused similar death rates in previous famine crises in the region. The UNHCR is working to control the measles outbreak. A mass vaccination campaign against measles was completed in Kobe camp in the first week of September, targeting all children between the ages of six months and 15 years.

But there is little hope that the emergency will end any time soon. The rains in August were not up to par and drought conditions continue.

NEW ETHIOPIAN DIASPORA: HOUSEHOLD HELP FOR SAUDI ARABIA

According to an article in the Arab News, a respected English language paper in Saudi Arabia, the chairman of the recruitment committee at Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Yahya Hassan Al-Maqbool, has urged the Ethiopian authorities to expedite visas and facilitate recruitment procedures for Ethiopian housemaids to work in Saudi Arabia. He wanted more Saudi recruitment offices to be set up to deal with a larger number of recruits and cut down processing time for maids which can take up to three months. At present each of the two Saudi recruitment offices was processing 60 visas from Ethiopia every month. “We are requesting to increase the number of visas given to each Saudi office to 500 monthly,” he said. He also called for increasing the number of weekly flights between the two countries. “These procedures will expedite the recruitment of housemaids from Ethiopia,” he added.

Al-Maqbool claims that the “manpower”— err, the woman power — recruited from Ethiopia has worked out well, but only time will tell whether Ethiopian household staff will be comfortable in Saudi Arabia. Al-Maqbool believed that the recruitment of 25,000 housemaids from Ethiopia during the coming few months would not be difficult if there was cooperation from the Ethiopian side. “The Ethiopian manpower has proved that they are a successful substitute for manpower from Southeast Asia, who were causing a lot of problems.”

There are 170 licensed offices in Ethiopia and 150 offices in Kenya to export manpower to Saudi Arabia. According to press reports, the Kingdom will open training institutes in the two African countries to qualify manpower before they are sent to the Kingdom. The demand for housemaids in the Kingdom has gone up because some South East Asian countries like the Philippines and Indonesia have put limits on household workers going to the Kingdom.

A NEW LONG-DISTANCE STAR EMERGES AS BEKELE FADES AGAIN

Ibrahim Jeilan of Ethiopia sprinted past Briton Mo Farah to win the men’s 10,000 meters world title on August 26 after four-times defending champion Kenenisa Bekele had limped off the track. Once again Bekele tried for a comeback, but failed. Jeilan’s time was 27 minutes 13.81, just seconds ahead of Farah who took the silver. Another Ethiopian, Imane Merga, was third.



WHERE'S BEKELE? Ibrahim Jeilan wins the World Championship in the 10,000 meters

Bekele, who had never been beaten on the track over 10,000 meters, had not raced in almost two years because of a calf injury. Bekele is the double Olympic champion and world record holder in the 5,000 meters. After the race he said that he did not regret coming to the South Korean city of Daegu for the important World Championships. He did not rule out racing again this season. Running in next year’s Olympics in London still remains a possibility. “I didn’t want to miss this race because I thought I had a chance,” he added. “I’m glad I came, I wanted to try,” he said, confirming that it was his right leg that was again causing problems.

Farah, who was trying to become the first British world champion over 10,000 meters, looked like he had the race sewn up when he began his kick for home at the bell announcing the last lap. “It means a lot winning a major medal, it would have been nice with a gold but the better man won on the day,” he said. That better man, the joyous Jeilan, said: “I don’t have the words to explain how I feel.”

NEW PRESS LAW CUTS FAST AND DEEP

Ethiopia’s tightly-controlled media has not been known for sticking its neck out on controversial issues, but a new law recently passed by an overwhelmingly government-controlled parliament will make the already gun-shy press even more cautious. And understandably so. The law expressly bans any form of communication with groups designated as terrorist organizations. This includes reporting from a press release of a possible terrorist group or interviewing their members. According to the law, any such act will be considered disseminating terror-related information and the publisher could be jailed. In August Reporters Without Borders wrote to Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi calling for the release of Reyot Alemu and Wubeshet Taye, two journalists who were arrested in June. RWB asked for

an investigation into the conditions in which they are being held. Reyot, a young woman columnist, is in very poor health, while Wubeshet, the deputy editor of a weekly, says he has been mistreated.

“The situation of both of these journalists is alarming,” the letter to the prime minister says. “We were very disturbed to learn that their pre-trial detention was extended yet again and we call for their immediate release.” When they were brought before a judge on 17 August, their pre-trial detention was extended for another 28 days. Accused of complicity with a political group that has been classified as a “terrorist” organization, they are due to appear in court again in September.



UNDER THREAT Sign marks the offices of Addis Neger, a popular newspaper which closed down.

Its editors fled into exile fearing that anti-terrorism laws would be used against the them

The deputy editor of the Awramba Times weekly, Wubeshet was arrested on 19 June. When he appeared before a federal court two months later, he said he was beaten during interrogation and was manhandled by prison officials. He was also forbidden to receive visits from his family and to organize his defense with his lawyer.

Reyot, a columnist for the Amharic-language weekly Fitih, was arrested on 21 June. The equipment and material that was seized at the time of her arrest was finally returned to her family a few days ago. The few visitors that have been allowed to see her are worried by the rapid deterioration in her health. After two months in detention, this young woman is showing signs of physical and psychological trauma. Although her family has been able to send her medicine, she is in urgent need of proper medical attention.

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Eritrean News

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News of Eritrea

Compiled by **Barry Hillenbrand**

FAMINE IN ERITREA: A MIRAGE OR A DISASTER?

The government of Eritrea denies that Eritrea is suffering the effects of the drought and famine which is plaguing Somalia and much of the rest of the Horn of Africa. They claim the country had a good harvest and ample food supplies. Presidential adviser Yemane Ghebreaab said: “There [are] no food shortages in Eritrea at the present time. Last year, we had a bumper harvest.” It has declined any aid.

But has Eritrea been immune to the famine? It's difficult to say since the country is largely closed to outside observers and the local press is run by the government under tight control. In its crisis map of the Horn of Africa region the UN has listed Eritrea as "stressed," but officials admit they have almost no information on the situation on the ground. A BBC report this month suggest that conditions in Eritrea may be dire. Satellite imagery from weather monitoring group the Famine Early Warning System shows below average rainfall from June to September. This is the main rainy season for Eritrea and comes after years of severe drought in consecutive years. Evidence of the problems Eritrea has can be found in northern Ethiopia. Emaciated Eritreans are crossing the heavily militarized border at the rate of 900 a month, according to journalists in the region. They tell tales of crops that have failed and homes without food, reports the BBC.



WATER BOY Eritrean refugee in Shagarab camp.

The American ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, recently described Eritrea as a black hole in terms of independent information. The Eritrean people "most likely are suffering the very same food shortages that we're seeing throughout the region (and) are being left to starve because there's a clear-cut denial of access by the government of Eritrea to food and other humanitarian support for its people," Ms Rice said. UN agencies have been refused access to Eritrea and most aid agencies have been expelled.

DEFECTING ERITREAN SAILOR FACE DEPORTATION

Over 30 members of the Eritrean naval forces have deserted to Yemen in August according to claims by an exiled Eritrean opposition group called the Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization. The group claims that the sailors are in danger of being forcibly returned to Eritrea by Yemeni authorities.

"A total of 38 Eritrean Navy members in four groups have fled to Yemen during the past two weeks . . . with their navy boats and weapons across the Red Sea" said a spokesman for the group. He said that since the start of July an increasing number of young Eritrean Afar refugees are attempting to cross the turbulent waters of Red Sea to Yemen. The opposition group expressed concern for the safety of the recently defected sailors and other Eritreans who remain in Yemeni detention centers. The group appealed to United Nations High Commission for Refugees to put pressure on Yemeni Government to refrain from deporting the Eritreans back to their home country where they face reprisals.

GOVERNMENT BUYS STAKE IN GOLD MINE

Nevsun Resources, the Canadian mining company which developed and owns the Bisha gold mine said the Eritrean government had agreed to pay \$253.5-million for its 30% stake in the operation. The state will settle the amount, which two independent international institutions helped determine, with after-tax cash flows from the mine. The move proves that Nevsun has a winner on its hands and that the government wanted to increase its share in the lucrative mining business. Enamco, the Eritrean state-owned mining company, will likely settle the amount within two years, depending on metals prices.



WE'LL TAKE ANOTHER 30%, PLEASE Canada's
Nevsun's gold and copper mining operations at
Bisha

“The government of Eritrea has significantly contributed to the project, both financially and through the board of directors of Bisha Mining Share Company, as well as through the support of the Ministry of Energy & Mines, the Ministry of Finance and various other Ministries,” Nevsun CEO Cliff Davis said in a statement. “By collaborating with international companies, Eritrea is developing a mining industry that provides direct economic benefits, skill enhancement and supply chain expansion.” In addition to the 30%, Enamco has a 10% free carry stake in Bisha, giving it a total 40% ownership. Bisha produced 93,000 oz. of gold in the second quarter this year, generating an after-tax net profit of \$60.6-million for Nevsun. And there’s lots more gold in Eritrean hills.

EDITOR’S NOTE: The Ethiopian and Eritrean news summaries are compiled with the invaluable assistance of Shlomo Bachrach’s East

African Forum which collects news items from the horn of Africa. Shlomo sends out a daily selection of the top stories from the region. To see his work, to register for his service and to discover how to support this important work go to www.eastafricaforum.net

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