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Satcher issues warning on American sexuality

By Julia Duin
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Surgeon General David Satcher released a much-delayed "call to action" on sexuality yesterday, informing Americans the country must address its high rates of sexually transmitted diseases, abortion, rapes, HIV infections and child sexual abuse.

However, he riled conservatives by insisting homosexuality is unchangeable and that his office found no evidence that abstinence-only programs are effective.

The report had been drafted in September by a committee, then got delayed once the more conservative Bush administration took office in January. What has emerged months later is a dire portrait of American sexual health that includes 12 million Americans infected by sexually transmitted diseases each year, including 40,000 new HIV infections. Forty-five million people -- one out of every six Americans -- have genital herpes.

More than 100,000 children are sexually abused each year and the annual yield of 1.4 million abortions affects one out of every four pregnancies. Nearly half of all pregnancies, he said, are unwanted.

He called on Americans to deal with "this serious public health challenge" but to respect "the diversity of sexual values within any community." Saying there is "no valid scientific evidence" that sexual orientation can be changed, he criticized a culture that "often stigmatizes homosexual behavior, identity and relationships."

Religious affiliation does not greatly affect sexual behavior, he said, but one's religious commitment does. A teen-ager's attendance at religious services means a greater

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