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June 14, 2006

Two Bolivian youths visit the White House invited by U.S. government

Both are outstanding athletes and now are also attending the Soccer World Cup in Germany, also invited by the Government of the United States

Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes welcomed a delegation of 30 young soccer players participating in the World Cup Sports Initiative in Washington, DC, New York City, and Germany, which began on June 10 and will conclude on June 24, 2006. The boys and girls, ages 13-18, represent 13 countries, including Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bolivia, China, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Uganda and Uzbekistan.

Two Bolivian youths were selected to participate in the program, which included a visit to the White House on June 12: José María Basco, senior class student at the English Catholic College of La Paz and player at the Municipal Club and Gustavo Gutiérrez, junior high at John Paul II school of Santa Cruz and soccer player at Tauichi Academy.

The World Cup Sports Initiative, a partnership between the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the U.S. Soccer Foundation, U.S. Soccer Federation, and Major League Soccer (MLS), reflects the theme of this year's FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) World Cup in Germany, "a time to make friends", with an emphasis on building international understanding and respect between young people around the world.

The participants will interact with American youth through visits to community sports programs and soccer efforts that serve young people with disabilities. The young athletes will attend a clinic hosted by the NCAA Men's Champion University of Maryland, be special guests at a D.C. United (MLS) practice, and take in a Red Bulls (MLS) game in New York. They'll also learn how the game of soccer is structured and played in the United States, including the important role of women as players, referees and coaches, at all levels. Under Secretary Hughes will lead the youth delegation to Nuremberg, Germany, for additional program activities and to attend the FIFA World Cup match between Ghana and the United States on June 22.



In the picture, the participants in the World Cup Sports Initiative with U.S. President George W. Bush on June 12. Gustavo Gutiérrez is at the center in the last row and José María Basco is the first on the second row, on the left.

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