Oil-rich Persian Gulf country to distribute grants
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By Barry Schweid

WASHINGTON (AP) - The oil-rich Persian Gulf nation Qatar has decided on the
distribution of about $60 million of a $100 million gift announced last September for
victims of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

The beneficiaries include $22 million for Habitat for Humanity to build 293 homes in the
three states; $12.5 million to expand the facilities of Xavier University's college of
pharmacy; $10 million for scholarships at Tulane University for students who are Katrina
victims; $5 million for scholarships for Katrina victims at Xavier University; and $3.3
million for a student relief fund at Louisiana State University.

Also, according to Mike Holtzman, a spokesman for the Qatar embassy, $5 million will
be used to establish a Qatar Cares fund at Children's Hospital in New Orleans; another
$351,651 for repair and renovation of clinics at the hospital; and $3 million for the March
of Dimes to purchase and equip vans.

Of the Habitat homes, 153 are to be built in Louisiana, 107 in Mississippi and 33 in
Alabama.

The gifts set records at Xavier, Habitat and Children's Hospital.

"I've been president 38 years. I've never been so fortunate as to have all this at one time,"
said Xavier President Norman Francis, who has seen Xavier's endowment rise from $2
million to more than $54 million since he took over in 1968.

He said it will let Xavier finish the pharmacy college's new wing by 2008, at least two
years earlier than it would have been done otherwise.

Brian Landry, vice president for marketing at Children's Hospital, the only full-service
pediatric hospital in Louisiana, said the $5 million contribution was the largest gift ever
received by the hospital.

"It is our duty to help people who were hurt," said Nasser Bin Hamad al-Khalifa, Qatar's
ambassador to the United States. "Today's globalization is making this one world and if
any tragedy takes place we are all aware of it."

"The key objective was to identify those most in need and to provide assistance as
directly as possible with minimal administrative expenses," the embassy said through its
spokesman in New York.
In addition to the size of the grant and the work it will allow, the grant is heartening as a statement, said Mark Crovet, senior vice president for resource development at Habitat for Humanity.

"The United States was the first nation to step up for the tsunami and other tragedies. It's really nice to see other people stepping up when we need help," he said.

The remaining $40 million in pledged contributions from Qatar will be committed in the next several weeks in consultation with an advisory committee, that includes former Secretary of State James A. Baker III, the statement said.

In all, about $126 million in contributions were received by the U.S. government. A little more than $700 million was pledged. Some of the pledges, including $400 million from Kuwait, are awaiting parliamentary approval.

Also, Saudi Arabia, which pledged $100 million, intends to contribute its donations directly to the area without going through the U.S. government, said a U.S. official who could not be identified because she was not assigned to make such announcements.

Among the major donations received were nearly $100 million from the United Arab Emirates; $5 million from Bahrain, $5 million from China; $3.8 million from South Korea; $2 million from Taiwan; $1 million from Brunei; and $1 million from Nigeria.