

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Internet Freedom Essential to Human Rights, Economic Prosperity

Secretary Clinton defines U.S. policy on upholding Internet freedom

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington – Internet freedom is essential to upholding human rights and encouraging economic prosperity, and the United States plans to aggressively promote Internet access for all peoples, says Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

“We stand for a single Internet where all of humanity has equal access to knowledge and ideas,” Clinton said in a groundbreaking foreign policy speech delivered January 21 at Washington’s Newseum.

She linked the freedom to use the Internet without government obstruction to basic human rights such as freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. Having the freedom to connect to the Internet, she said, “is like the freedom of assembly, only in cyberspace.”

Clinton compared the efforts of some governments to deny their citizens unfettered Internet access to the construction of the Berlin Wall. “Virtual walls are cropping up in place of visible walls,” she said.

“Some countries have erected electronic barriers that prevent their people from accessing portions of the world’s networks,” Clinton said. “They have expunged words, names and phrases from search-engine results.

“They have violated the privacy of citizens who engage in nonviolent political speech. These actions contravene the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which tells us that all people have the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

While praising the “brave citizen journalists” in Iran who have used cell-phone video to tell the world about brutal repression in their country, Clinton also noted that “free expression has its limits.”

“We do not tolerate those who incite others to violence, such as the agents of al-Qaida who are at this moment using the Internet to promote the mass murder of innocent people across the world. And hate speech that targets individuals on the basis of their race, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation is reprehensible,” the secretary said.

The Internet, Clinton said, is a valuable tool in promoting

social justice. She gave the example of an unemployed engineer in Colombia who used the Internet to bring together more than 12 million people in 190 cities around the world to demonstrate against the FARC terrorist movement. In Mexico, a private citizen using e-mail was able to mobilize some 150,000 people to demonstrate against drug-related violence. And in India, a 13-year-old boy using online social networks was able to organize blood drives for the victims of terrorist attacks in Mumbai.

Thanks to affordable technology, there are some 4 billion cell phones being used around the world, even in the poorest sectors of society, Clinton said. “Information networks have become a great leveler,” Clinton said, “and we should use them together to lift people out of poverty and give them freedom from want.”

The secretary noted that when President Obama visited China in November 2009, he publicly defended the right of people to freely access information and said that the more freely information flows, the stronger societies become.

“He spoke about how access to information helps citizens hold their own governments accountable, generates new ideas, encourages creativity and entrepreneurship,” she said.

When asked about efforts by the Chinese government to censor and control American technology companies operating inside its borders, Clinton said the Obama administration is engaged in “very candid and constructive conversation with the Chinese government.” She added: “We have had a positive year of very open discussions with our Chinese counterparts.”

The Obama administration, Clinton said, is reinvigorating the Global Internet Freedom Task Force as a forum for addressing threats to Internet freedom around the world.

“We are urging U.S. media companies to take a proactive role in challenging foreign governments’ demands for censorship and surveillance. The private sector has a shared responsibility to help safeguard free expression,” she said. “And when their business dealings threaten to undermine this freedom, they need to consider what’s right, not simply what’s a quick profit.”

The Obama administration, she said, is “encouraged” by the work currently being done by the Global Network Initiative, which is a voluntary effort by technology companies – along with nongovernmental organizations, academic experts and social-investment funds – to respond to government requests for censorship. She announced that as a part of the U.S. government commitment to support responsible private-sector

engagement on information freedom, the State Department will hold a high-level meeting next month to bring together firms that provide network services for talks about Internet freedom.

Search-and-Rescue Missions Continuing in Haiti

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Search-and-rescue missions are continuing in Haiti, more than a week after the earthquake, and the 43 international teams have managed to pull 122 people from the rubble of collapsed buildings as of January 20, State Department deputy spokesman Gordon Duguid told reporters January 21 in a teleconference from Haiti.

Duguid said the teams, which include six from the United States, have done “an exceptional job” and have been working nonstop through shifts in separate locations since the first team from Fairfax, Virginia, arrived in the country on January 13, less than 24 hours after the disaster.

Disaster relief experts from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) also arrived in the initial hours and went to work identifying sites where rescuers were most likely to find survivors. Each individual rescue takes a team about eight hours, Duguid said.

He added that the Haitian government “has the authority” in the operations and “they decide when to call a halt” to them. “But in practice, search-and-rescue operations never end,” Duguid explained. When survivors and neighbors report sounds or other evidence that someone may still be alive in the rubble, “search-and-rescue will be called back,” he said.

Colonel Buck Elton, commander of the Joint Special Operations Air Component in Haiti, told reporters on the teleconference that his team was responsible for setting up the Toussaint Louverture International Airport hours after the earthquake. With Haiti’s ports out of operation, the airport has been the primary conduit of relief supplies and workers into the country since the earthquake. But it has been “quite a challenge,” he said.

“We are operating out of an airfield that does not have electricity, phone, computer or anything other than what we brought in with us when we arrived that first day,” Elton said. U.S. military air traffic controllers are working 12-hour shifts outside in the sun, where they have set up on the airport’s infield grass.

Before the earthquake, the airport normally handled 13 commercial flights per day on its single runway, which prevents planes from taking off and landing at the same

time. The airport ramp will also hold only 12 aircraft at a time, and since there is limited equipment on the tarmac to offload supplies, it can take as much as five hours to remove the cargo from a large Boeing 747 or Airbus 330, Elton said.

But the airport is now coping with as many as 200 takeoffs and landings. As U.S. military personnel have been steadily increasing the airport’s capacity, they have been consulting daily with Haitian government officials and international aid organizations to determine which flights and which cargo are the most crucial and should take priority. There are also established flow-control procedures, which Elton said are making operations smoother, with fewer delays or diversions.

As troops from the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit and the Army’s 82nd Airborne Division continued work on the ground to deliver humanitarian aid supplies to the Haitian people, Elton said, the U.S. military conducted its second airdrop of relief supplies January 21, delivering 14,000 meals and 14,000 water bottles via parachute near the town of Mirebalais.

Nepalese troops serving with the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) “secured the drop zone and assisted with the delivery of the food to the local population,” he said.

Airdrops can bring relief supplies to areas that are difficult to reach due to remoteness, transportation challenges or other issues. However, both U.S. and U.N. officials have been reluctant to use the procedure unless security on the ground can be provided to distribute the relief in an equitable and organized manner.

Elton said U.S. forces have been delivering aid to “locations identified by both the Haitian government and by the international aid organizations as places that needed aid” and that so far he and his staff have observed in the aid distribution that “the Haitian people are quite generous and peaceful in helping each other.”

IMF, World Bank Planning for Haiti’s Reconstruction

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The International Monetary Fund pledged an interest-free loan of \$100 million in initial emergency funds to the Haitian government that can be used for essential services and to finance urgent imports, Managing Director Dominique Strauss-Kahn said.

“The urgency, today, is to save the people. The urgency, in some weeks, will be the reconstruction,” Strauss-Kahn said January 20 in Hong Kong at the Asian Financial Forum.

The World Bank also announced \$100 million in emergency grant funding to support recovery and reconstruction for the Caribbean nation. President Obama announced similar emergency funding within hours of the devastating earthquake that has destroyed large sections of the capital Port-au-Prince and the surrounding area.

The European Union has pledged \$200 million in short-term assistance and another \$300 million for longer-term assistance. Many individual EU nations have made pledges of \$100 million.

World Bank President Robert Zoellick said the World Bank is "mobilizing significant financial assistance and sending a team to help assess damage and reconstruction needs." In addition to new initiatives, the World Bank expects to use existing projects, including those that focus on education and community-driven development, to provide assistance quickly and effectively, Zoellick said.

But Strauss-Kahn said financial relief is only a part of the solution for Haiti, after it was devastated by a magnitude 7.0 earthquake nine days ago that killed approximately 200,000 people, though the actual number is uncertain, with many more injured and nearly 2 million people homeless.

"My belief is that Haiti – which has been incredibly hit by different things, the food- and fuel-price crisis, then the hurricane, then the earthquake – needs something that is big," Strauss-Kahn said. "Not only a piecemeal approach, but something which is much bigger to deal with the reconstruction of the country."

Strauss-Kahn called for a Marshall Plan for Haiti, referring to a plan named for U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall, who proposed a plan to help rebuild war-torn Europe following World War II. Ultimately, the plan, financed by the United States, helped most of Western Europe recover and then rebuild, leading to significant economic growth that is still being felt in many areas of Europe.

With the daily suffering it is difficult to focus on longer-term needs, but Strauss-Kahn said one of the most important things the IMF and its donors can do for Haiti's recovery is work to delete all the Haitian debt – effectively making a fresh start, including deleting the debt from the new emergency loan.

The World Bank also announced that it will provide the resources to establish a multidonor trust fund, the Haiti Reconstruction Fund, to mobilize international support for recovery and reconstruction.

On January 20, the Paris Club of 19 international Haiti

creditors appealed to all nations holding Haitian debt to cancel the debts to help jump-start reconstruction. "Considering the financing needs that Haiti will face in reconstructing the country, Paris Club creditors call upon other bilateral creditors also to urgently provide full debt cancellation to Haiti," the informal financial group said in a prepared statement.

Haiti's public external debt totaled \$1.885 billion at the end of September 2008.

The IMF's Strauss-Kahn said the reconstruction effort cannot be done by a simple rule-of-thumb approach. "We need to go into Haiti; we need to work with the government to see exactly how, from their point of view and from our point of view, things can be done. To do that, we need to take some time," he said.

SERVICES FUNCTIONING

In a separate statement, Nicolás Eyzaguirre, the director of the IMF's Western Hemisphere Department, said nearly all of Haiti's productive capacity was located around Port-au-Prince and was destroyed.

"We need to urgently help Haiti to get its economy functioning again. All state and government institutions were badly damaged," he said. "Banks were destroyed and the payments system shut down."

Eyzaguirre said the IMF, working closely with other donors, is assisting the authorities in getting cash to circulate in the economy so people can buy food and civil servants can be paid.

"Banks will reopen shortly, but the payments system is not fully operational yet," Eyzaguirre said.

On the positive side, he said that some transfer houses that receive remittances from Haitians living abroad have reopened. According to the IMF, remittances sent to families in Haiti from relatives abroad total \$1.8 billion annually, about 20 percent of the nation's gross domestic product.

"We compare this event to the hurricanes in 2008, which were estimated to have cost around 15 percent of GDP (about \$900 million)," Eyzaguirre added. "The impact of this earthquake could be much higher, but there's still a lot of uncertainty."

Gates Says Violent Extremism Is "Common Enemy" for Pakistan, U.S.

Regional cooperation needed to eliminate terror syndicate

The following article originally appeared January 21 on the Department of Defense Web site.

Gates: Extremism Biggest Threat to Pakistan, India

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan, Jan. 21, 2010 — The most pressing threat to Pakistan and India — and the region, as well as the United States — is violent extremism, not each other, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said here today [January 21], reiterating the message he delivered in his last stop in India.

“This was a theme that I basically sounded while I was in India: that Afghanistan, Pakistan and India all share a common enemy, as do we in the United States,” Gates said during interviews with Pakistan’s Express TV cable station and the state-owned Pakistan TV at U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne W. Patterson’s official residence.

Gates cited a terror syndicate that threatens the region, noting that the various organizations all operate under the same umbrella. “You can’t say one is good and one is not good,” he said. “They are all insidious, and safe havens for all of them need to be eliminated.”

The secretary emphasized the need for Pakistan and India to work cooperatively, and with the United States and coalition, to face this threat, rather than pointing fingers at each other.

He worked to allay concerns about India’s activities in Afghanistan, emphasizing that Indian officials assured him during his visit to New Delhi that they are limited to economic development programs.

“[Indian] Prime Minister [Manmohan] Singh was very explicit in saying that either in Afghanistan or more generally, that Pakistan has nothing to fear from India,” he said.

Gates congratulated the Pakistanis today [January 21] on the success of the operations they have conducted in confronting violent extremists.

Gates declined to discuss drone activities directly, but offered, “I will say that these unmanned aerial vehicles have been extremely useful to us, both in Iraq and in Afghanistan.”

The United States is working to provide the Pakistanis their own intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets, he said, and considering providing tactical UAVs — 12 unarmed RQ-7 Shadows funded through the Pakistan counterinsurgency fund.

These capabilities would help the Pakistani military better monitor activities along the country’s porous border with

Afghanistan, he said.

Asked about the July 2011 timeline to begin troop withdrawals in Afghanistan under President Barack Obama’s new Afghanistan strategy, Gates emphasized that it marks only the beginning of a process of drawing down. “There is no deadline,” he said, and the drawdown pace is to be determined by conditions on the ground.

Gates said he’s confident in the new strategy, and believes that with Army Gen. Stanley McChrystal overseeing its implementation and 30,000 additional U.S. troops on the ground, “we have the right leader and the right troops soon to be in place to be successful in this conflict.”

Gates acknowledged during the interviews the United States’ past mistake in abandoning Pakistan, and promised not to repeat it. “We are determined to be a reliable and long-term ally,” he said.

“We are focused on the way ahead.”

The secretary acknowledged “conspiracy theories” within Pakistan and elsewhere about U.S. intentions, and countered them head-on.

“We have no intention or desire to take over Pakistan’s nuclear weapons,” he said. “We have no desire to occupy any part of Pakistan or split up any part of Pakistan. We have no intent to split the Islamic world.”

“And I can keep going, because we are aware of these conspiracy theories as much as anyone,” he continued. “And they are all nonsense.”

Gates expressed admiration for the way Pakistan’s military has stepped up to face extremism, and recognized the sacrifices it has taken in the process.

“We are prepared to provide whatever help they want to make them more effective,” he said.

Gates met today [January 21] with Pakistani Defense Minister Ahmad Mukhtar, Army Chief Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani and Gen. Tariq Majid, chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, and Intelligence Chief Gen. Ahmad Shujaa Pasha.

He attended a dinner hosted by Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, where he also met with Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

While in Islamabad, Gates laid a floral wreath at the Pakistan army’s Martyrs Monument honoring those lost for Pakistan’s security.

Gates characterized today's [January 21] sessions as highly productive, touching on a wide range of important issues, Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell told reporters.

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