

American

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Secretary Clinton to Attend Yemen Security Conference in London

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Supporting Yemen as it faces security challenges posed by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula is a significant part of the U.S. strategy with Yemen's leaders, but there are also efforts to help with economic, governance and social issues, says the State Department's senior counterterrorism official.

A Yemen security conference, chaired by British Foreign Minister David Miliband, is being held January 27 in London, and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton will join 20 other world leaders to discuss political and economic issues that face the country, says Daniel Benjamin, the U.S. counterterrorism coordinator.

The British Foreign Office said in London January 26 that the short conference will focus on "how to assist the Yemen government to improve security, root out al-Qaida and promote economic and social development." The meeting was called following the failed Christmas Day 2009 terror attack by a Nigerian man on a Northwest Airlines flight from Amsterdam that was about to land in Detroit.

"I should say that we are very pleased by the strong stance that [Yemeni] President [Ali Abdullah] Saleh and his government have taken in terms of confronting al-Qaida," Benjamin said at a January 25 briefing.

"It may appear on the surface to be a suddenly new involvement in things Yemeni for the United States, but in fact this administration has been engaged on Yemen really since the very beginning," Benjamin added.

While helping Yemeni authorities increase their ability to address security threats, it is also vitally important to help Yemen through long-term engagement to deal with the other issues it faces, he said. Yemen has substantial economic issues, including the depletion of natural resources, demographic challenges, a depleting water table, and issues of governance, Benjamin said.

The United States has a three-year, \$121 million economic assistance program with Yemen, and separately is providing \$70 million in military assistance. Yemen's foreign minister, Abu Bakr al-Qirbi, was in Washington January 21 for consultations with Clinton in advance of the security summit in London.

AL-QAIDA IN YEMEN

Benjamin said Yemen has struggled with terrorists for

some time, even though the al-Qaida term hasn't been used until recently. The first known attack inspired by Saudi-born Osama bin Laden took place in December 1992 at a hotel in Aden where U.S. troops were staying.

In October 2000, the Navy destroyer USS Cole was attacked by a suicide bomber while the ship was in the Yemeni port of Aden, killing 17 U.S. sailors in addition to two terrorists.

A federal indictment issued in Michigan January 6 alleges that 23-year-old Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab of Nigeria attempted to detonate a makeshift bomb on a Northwest Airlines flight from Amsterdam to Detroit on December 25, 2009. Abdulmutallab, who claimed he was trained by al-Qaida in Yemen, was arrested by federal agents after the airplane with 289 passengers and crew aboard landed safely at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

After the attempted attack, bin Laden, the leader of the transnational terrorist group al-Qaida, purportedly issued an audio tape taking credit for the failed attack, and warning that more attacks would be coming. Benjamin said, however, that "He's ... associating himself with it and ... trying to get some of the reflected ... glory of the moment, if you can call it that."

Benjamin indicated it was unclear if Bin Laden was actually responsible: "Bin Laden has been trying to put his fingerprints on just about everything that's happened for years. And in that regard, I think ... we're kind of used to it."

Benjamin said one of the problems in fighting terrorism is that terrorists usually do not defend a lot of territory and remain quite mobile.

"Part of the reason that AQAP [al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula] has become a more potent threat in recent years is that Saudi Arabia did such a superb job in ramping up its counterterrorism efforts in the wake of the May 2003 attacks there, and as a result, really, al-Qaida within Saudi Arabia was put out of business for quite a while," Benjamin said.

"But a number of the most dangerous operatives did move from Saudi Arabia to Yemen and sort of swelled the ranks of the AQAP core there," he said.

Haiti Receives 10-Year Commitment from International Community

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Countries and international organizations that will pledge money to help Haiti recover from the January 12 earthquake have agreed to hold a donors

conference in New York in March and have declared a 10-year commitment to the country. The needs in Haiti are immense, and the Haitian people are continuing to suffer despite the massive aid and relief effort that mobilized as a result of the disaster, they say.

At the Haiti Ministerial Preparatory Conference in Montreal January 25, the government of Haiti and key donors and partners, including the United States, Canada, Brazil, the European Union, Spain and France, agreed to respect the sovereignty of the Haitian government and people in the joint reconstruction and development effort, and align their priorities with those established by the government of Haiti.

According to the chairman's statement, released January 25, the conference attendees declared that "Haitians own their future," and pledged to stand with Haiti for the long term.

"An initial 10-year commitment is essential, as is a concerted effort to build Haiti's capacity. Sustainable development, including environmental sustainability, climate resilience, disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness, will be a cornerstone of our joint approach," the statement says.

It also calls for "mutual transparency and accountability" in deciding how to allocate and manage resources, and to build "effective, accountable and transparent democratic institutions able to deliver basic services and to protect and promote human rights."

In her remarks at the conference, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said it is "important that we see ourselves as partners with Haiti — not patrons."

The United States will support the Haitian government "so that this is truly a Haitian-led effort, one that responds to the aspirations and the needs of the Haitian people," she said.

The secretary said that ahead of the donors conference in New York, the pledging countries and organizations have decided to hold technical meetings to do a needs assessment and plan coordination ahead of declaring how much money they will give in March. She said this approach will add to donor confidence.

"We're trying to do this in the correct order," she said. "Sometimes people have pledging conferences and pledge money [but] they don't have any idea what they're going to do with it."

Haiti is still in an emergency, and Clinton cited Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive's statement in Montreal that not all of the Haitian people are currently

being fed, given water, or receiving medical treatment. In addition, many need shelter, and amputees need prosthetic limbs.

"We are committed to ... doing this in a way that builds confidence in the international community and among donor states and donor organizations and individuals," she said.

Haitian-American Community Contributes to Quake Relief Efforts

Sports figures as well as nurses give money, lend needed skills
By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Staff Writer

Washington — Haitian Americans ranging from sports figures to professionals like nurses are donating money and their skills to help victims of the January 12 earthquake in Haiti that killed more than 150,000 people and left countless thousands homeless without food, water and medical care.

The Haitian diaspora in America consists of roughly 535,000 people born in Haiti and up to another 300,000 claiming Haitian descent. Professional basketball star Samuel Dalembert, born and raised in Haiti, is an example from a tight-knit community that maintains close ties to its former homeland.

Before a recent game in Philadelphia, Dalembert gave \$100,000 to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for earthquake relief and promised to match donations made by fans during the game, which amounted to \$30,000. The Detroit Lions football team is making a \$10,000 donation for Haiti relief in honor of three of its players of Haitian descent — Gosder Cherilus, Cliff Avril and Louis Delmas.

Despite its talent, "the Haitian-American community was never as prosperous as other immigrant groups," says Sandy Dorsainvil, director of the Haitian American Professionals Coalition (HAPC), an umbrella organization of 10 separate groups of Haitian-American educators, engineers, law enforcement officers, lawyers, nurses, social workers and chambers of commerce.

"But even with the recent economic downturn, their response to those suffering the aftereffects of the earthquake has been very impressive," Dorsainvil told America.gov in a January 25 phone interview from her HAPC office in Florida, where she has helped direct thousands of dollars worth of donations from her member groups.

The day following the earthquake, Dorsainvil said, "We sent an assessment group of members of our engineers and medical association" to determine what was

happening and what areas needed help. The next week, "we had 30 volunteers from the Haitian American Nursing Association [HANA] to Haiti where they treated hundreds of patients."

Meanwhile, Dorsainvil said, "we've had an ongoing fundraising effort that raised between \$8,000 to \$9,000 in cash. Times are tough for many individuals and families, so many of our donations have been in-kind by companies and hospitals in southern Florida. Several companies are donating water-filtration systems, and now we have gotten two large and 50 smaller units that will be sent to Haiti and used in clean-drinking-water distribution points."

Dorsainvil said HAPC has been working with Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, south Florida's largest hospital, and "several vendors there have donated medical supplies that will be sent to Haiti in about a week."

Marie Etienne, a nurse and professor at the University of Miami medical school, accompanied 29 other Haitian-American nurses and members of HANA who worked for a week in two tent clinics in Haiti. After returning to Florida, the Haitian-born Etienne told America.gov that she never had witnessed such trauma before. In the brief time the medical team was in the country, she said, "We treated more than 280 seriously injured patients and performed 25 amputations."

Etienne, whose HANA team was sponsored by Catholic Charities and the University of Miami's Project Medishare, said she wanted "to thank the Obama administration and all the people and organizations that have donated money and supplies." She added that another 10 nurses from the HANA pool of 500 members would return to Haiti soon.

Another Haitian American lending his medical skills to Haiti is U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander Mill Etienne, a neurosurgeon who lived and worked in the Washington area before recently returning to active duty. He is serving aboard the hospital ship USNS Comfort, providing emergency surgery and medical treatment to hundreds of Haitians.

After first coming to the United States at age 5, Etienne recently told the Gaithersburg/Montgomery Village Gazette, "now I get to give back to Haiti." Etienne is joined on the Comfort by 15 other Americans of Haitian descent.

Following a January 25 Haiti relief meeting in Montreal, U.S. Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida said of citizens' relief efforts, "I continue to be deeply moved by the outpouring of support for Haiti from people in Florida

and across the United States."

Looking ahead to the reconstruction effort, the lawmaker said, "Any discussion of relief efforts must take into account the tremendous generosity shown by private Americans in this time of need. We cannot let that generosity go to waste."

On the government side, President Obama has pledged \$100 million for emergency aid and reconstruction for Haiti while sending 10,000 military personnel to the island to aid and provide security for relief efforts. In addition, more than 7,000 patients were treated by five disaster medical assistance teams from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and one international medical surgical team (IMSuRT) in Haiti, all funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development Agency (USAID) since January 21.

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