

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## United States Helping Countries Counter Illegal Drugs

By Kathryn McConnell  
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States is committing resources to help other countries enforce anti-drug and money-laundering laws, said a top State Department official.

“Our cooperative efforts are essential,” David Johnson said in a briefing at the department. Johnson is the State Department’s assistant secretary for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

U.S. assistance ranges from training law enforcement officers to providing economic assistance to farmers to help them move away from poppy production.

The illegal drug trade threatens the security interests of the United States and the international community, according to the 2010 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report released March 1. “No other criminal activity can match the profits generated from illegal narcotics trafficking,” the report says.

The United States recognizes that it also needs to reduce its domestic demand for illegal drugs. “Without additional progress in reducing demand at home, our gains will be under severe pressure,” the report states.

The report, which covers activities in 2009, says that during the past decade, virtually every country has recognized the serious threats posed by the drug trade, and such consensus is a great advantage to future drug-control efforts.

In the Western Hemisphere, Colombia’s citizens and political leadership have resolved to re-establish the rule of law, resulting in reductions in illegal drug production, according to the report. “The Colombian state is no longer in danger from insurgents fueled by the drug trade,” the report says.

The United States and Mexico have agreed to cooperate more closely to strengthen institutions that prosecute those involved in the drug trade and other organized crime. Mexico also is developing the means to do background investigations of its entire police force. For the first time, trafficking groups are facing a threat from the state “which they cannot win by bribery or intimidations,” according to the report.

As Mexico and Colombia continue to apply pressure on drug traffickers, countries in Central America and the Caribbean face problems from displaced traffickers who use land routes and coastal waters to move illegal drugs. To address the displacement, the United States is helping

communicate police information to affected governments and is paying for police equipment, training and the development of new community programs.

The United Nations confirms that the drug trade is becoming more fragmented, the report says, with new markets and routes. Drugs are being trafficked by air from the Venezuela/Colombia border through West African countries to Europe, the region with the fastest growing cocaine markets, the report says. Despite limited capacity in many West African countries to investigate and prosecute drug traffickers, there have been some successes, notably in Sierra Leone.

The United States is prepared to deepen its work with Venezuela to help counter the increasing flow of illegal drugs through the country, according to the report. One problem, according to Johnson, is that while Venezuela has been willing to cooperate to fight drug trafficking by sea, it has not been willing to cooperate in stopping trafficking by air.

On a positive note, Afghanistan’s poppy production declined about 30 percent between 2007 and 2009, Johnson said. In 2009, the United States shifted its approach from focusing on eradicating poppies to a more cost-effective approach of developing alternative ways for farmers to earn a living. In Helmand province, Afghans have both expanded police enforcement and offered alternatives to drug production, he said.

## Strong U.S. Engagement with Asia-Pacific Region Is Vital

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — Free trade and strong economic engagement remain critical pillars for U.S. relations in East Asia and the Pacific, Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell says.

At the same time, despite significant economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region, it is home to many of the most pressing security challenges of the modern era, Campbell added in prepared congressional testimony March 3. “What is often absent in our discussion about the ‘Asian miracle’ are the challenges posed by uneven growth, poverty, and weak and ineffective governments,” he said.

“Hundreds of millions have yet to benefit from the fruits of the Asian miracle, and income inequality continues to strain the capacity of governments to provide for their citizens.”

Trade with Asia is increasing faster than in any other region, and the United States currently exports more

goods to Asia than it does to the European Union, and nearly as much as it does through the North American Free Trade Agreement. One of the consequences of the global economic recovery that is under way is that American and Asian economies have become increasingly interdependent, Campbell said.

Campbell acknowledged in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific that the region is a key driver for technological innovation in the world and accounts for nearly a third of the global gross domestic product, a measure of the worth of all goods and services produced.

Campbell, the assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, told the House committee that while the United States faces challenges in other regions of the world, "the most significant geopolitical events of the 21st century are playing out in the Asia-Pacific." Of note, he said, are issues of climate change, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, extremist groups, unresolved territorial disputes, and growing competition for energy and natural resources.

Citing the rise of new powers India and China and their interactions with established powers such as Japan and the United States, Campbell said a comprehensive strategy that creates space for new powers can ensure they emerge peacefully and in a way that advances the international system, and conflict need not be an issue.

Part of the responsibility of the United States in the region, he said, is to enhance and deepen its strategic engagement and leadership role. "The rapid emergence of transnational security challenges demands collective action," he said. "In fact, working with allies and partners is critical to solving some of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century. Nowhere is this truer than in the Asia-Pacific region."

#### STEPS TAKEN

In the past year the United States has re-engaged in the region through high-profile visits of the senior U.S. leadership and participation at high-level regional meetings, Campbell said. In March President Obama will make his second trip to the region since taking office, visiting Indonesia and Australia.

Obama visited Japan, Singapore, China and South Korea during a 10-day trip in November 2009 that focused on economics, trade and security issues. During that trip Obama attended meetings of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, meeting with leaders from across the region.

The U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue meeting was held in July 2009 and was hosted by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner. The continuing dialogue provides a venue for Chinese and U.S. officials to address issues affecting both nations, the region and the globe, Campbell said. Clinton also attended meetings in Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore and China.

"The pace of our engagement with the region signals the renewed emphasis we place on developing partnerships in this critical region," Campbell told the committee.

In addition to high-level visits, Campbell said, the United States is renewing engagement in other ways. After a formal review of U.S. policy toward Burma, Obama reaffirmed fundamental goals: a democratic Burma at peace with the region and a Burma that respects to rights of its people.

"A policy of pragmatic engagement with the Burmese authorities holds the best hope for advancing this goal," Campbell said. "Under this approach, U.S. sanctions will remain in place until Burmese authorities demonstrate that they are prepared to make meaningful progress on U.S. core concerns."

During the president's trip later in March to Australia, he will seek to deepen the bilateral alliance, Campbell said. "This is one of our strongest alliances in the region and in the world."

Campbell told Congress that the Asia-Pacific region is of vital and permanent importance to the United States, and it is clear that the countries in the region want the United States to maintain a strong and active presence. "What happens in the region has a direct effect on our security and economic well-being," he said.

#### **India, United States Host Forum on Promoting Methane Capture, Use**

*Thirty nations meet in India to advance clean energy, combat climate change*

Washington — At the second Methane to Markets Partnership Expo, hosted by the United States, India and India's Chambers of Commerce and Industry, attendees from 30 countries are considering options and comparing approaches for capturing and using methane.

Methane is a clean-burning fuel that is the main component of natural gas and an important energy source. Methane is more than 20 times more effective than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere, and it accounts for 16 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions from human sources.

With the potential to eliminate 17.3 million metric tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions per year – the same as the annual greenhouse gas emissions from about 3.3 million cars – the showcased projects can provide significant clean development and climate change benefits throughout the world. Member countries and representatives from the private sector are discussing technology, economic and policy issues that could further advance methane reduction opportunities.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is representing the United States at the exposition, taking place March 2-5 in New Delhi.

“We’re coming together as a global community to tackle a global challenge and move into the clean-energy future,” said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. “The Methane to Markets Partnership is cutting greenhouse gases and providing new, clean energy options to communities and businesses around the world.”

According to the EPA, significantly reducing methane emissions is one of the most cost-effective ways to realize immediate environmental benefits because of methane’s potency as a greenhouse gas.

In November 2004, the United States joined 13 other countries in an agreement that formally created a partnership to advance international cooperation in recovering and using methane as a profitable source of clean energy. The Methane to Markets Partnership is part of the U.S. strategy to address climate-change issues.

The public-private partnership seeks to reduce greenhouse gas pollution by promoting the near-term development of cost-effective methane capture-and-use projects that provide a clean energy source. The partnership now includes 30 countries, the European Commission and more than 900 private-sector organizations.

Since the partnership began in 2004, it has supported more than 170 projects that have eliminated an estimated 27 million metric tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent annually – equal to the electricity use of 3.5 million homes. The partnership also has held more than 80 events in 23 countries, generated \$84 million in funding for activities and projects, and attracted more than \$350 million in private financing for capacity building and project development aimed at capturing and using methane.

The partnership also has developed an array of computer-based tools and information services. It organized the first Partnership Expo in Beijing in 2007, which brought together more than 700 people.

In India, the EPA launched a partnership with that nation’s Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) in September 2008. As a result, the ONGC chairman directed his managers to implement cost-effective practices that could reduce ONGC methane emissions by an estimated 10 million cubic meters per year.

In China in 2007, the EPA launched initiatives to work with coal mines by conducting three full-scale feasibility studies at the Liuzhuang mine in Anhui province, a group of six mines in the Songzao coal basin in Chongqing, and six mines in the Hebi region of Henan province. The EPA also funded a feasibility study for a new technology that mitigates diluted methane from coal mine ventilation shafts at the Tiefa mine in Liaoning province.

In Nigeria, the EPA supported a study at the Okpara mine, where mining is expected to start again in 2010 after several years of inactivity. The mine has the potential to produce up to 363,000 metric tons of coal per year.

With the World Bank, the EPA has supported livestock waste-management projects in Southeast Asia since 2004. The World Bank provided \$21 million to develop affordable pollution-control methods for livestock waste management in China, Thailand and Vietnam, and the EPA provided technical assistance needed to implement the projects.

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