

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Secretary Clinton, EU Parliament Leader Seek Stronger Trans-Atlantic Ties	1
Announcement on Global Entrepreneurship Program	1
U.S. Charges 11 Somalis with Maritime Piracy	2
Ozomatli Prepares to Connect Musically with China and Mongolia	3

Secretary Clinton, EU Parliament Leader Seek Stronger Trans-Atlantic Ties

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington – While the European Union and the United States have much in common, the two sides are still trying to resolve privacy issues related to tracking terrorist financing, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says.

Clinton and European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek discussed the need for stronger trans-Atlantic ties at a joint press briefing April 27 at the State Department.

“This partnership is essential to solving a wide range of shared challenges, from energy security and climate change to terrorism and global governance,” Clinton told reporters.

Buzek, a former prime minister of Poland, was in Washington for meetings with Clinton and members of Congress and to open a new European Parliament liaison office for the U.S. Congress.

The European Union and the United States have many common challenges to tackle, Buzek told reporters, that require a stronger understanding for effective responses.

Ties between the European Parliament and the U.S. Congress began in 1972 when a congressional delegation visited the parliament in Brussels and Luxembourg for the first time. They have been having similar meetings ever since.

“The European Parliament plays a critical role for the European Union, the people of Europe, and indeed the world,” Clinton said. “The recent Lisbon Treaty has strengthened it further, including its role in international affairs.”

Among the issues Clinton and Buzek addressed were efforts to track financing for terrorist groups. A proposal on tracking terrorist financing is on the European Parliament’s legislative agenda. Clinton said such a program is vital to saving lives and is essential to cooperation between the EU and the United States to thwart terrorism.

But Clinton acknowledged concerns by Europeans that a tracking program could breach areas of privacy. “So, we will work together to find solutions that ensure the program both enhances our mutual security and respects our values,” she said.

The European Parliament has rejected an agreement that would have allowed the United States access to a

database of international financial transfers that would have included customer names, account numbers and other personal information.

Another issue discussed, Clinton said, was Iran.

“We have consistently, in Europe and the United States, called on Iran’s government to respect the rights of its people and to resolve international concerns over its nuclear enrichment aspirations,” she said.

The United States has been working with other members of the U.N. Security Council and the European Union on new sanctions designed to convince the Iranian regime to curtail its nuclear development program.

Buzek also met with Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the House of Representatives, who said it is essential for the EU and the United States “to build a much closer trans-Atlantic legislative partnership,” including creation of joint working groups.

Announcement on Global Entrepreneurship Program

GEP will support entrepreneurs in Muslim communities worldwide

U.S. Department of State
April 27, 2010

Fact Sheet

Global Entrepreneurship Program (GEP)

The Global Entrepreneurship Program (GEP) is a new program focused on supporting and empowering entrepreneurs in Muslim communities around the world – and beyond. It will do this by marshalling partners, both U.S. and in-country, as well as multiple U.S. government programs around the six areas considered to be essential to creating a successful ecosystem for entrepreneurs. These six areas are: ‘Identify,’ ‘Train,’ ‘Connect,’ ‘Guide to funding,’ ‘Sustain,’ and ‘Celebrate’ entrepreneurs. The proposed program has twelve focus countries throughout the world, including seven Muslim majority countries.

The GEP is a powerful demonstration of the U.S. government’s long-term commitment to advancing entrepreneurship – by providing expertise and tools geared at building local capacity – and will serve as the secretariat to sustain and expand the initiatives launched at the Summit. In her Closing Remarks, Secretary Clinton will announce the GEP and the first pilot programs in Egypt (with significant support from USAID) and Indonesia. More will follow.

In Egypt, as part of GEP, On the Frontiers Pioneers of

Prosperity program is bringing its highly regarded business plan competition programs; the Small Enterprise Assistance Fund's Centers for Entrepreneurship and Executive Development, CEED, will provide their training and alumni networking programs; Endeavor, will deepen their best-in-class high-impact mentoring with the addition of their new Mentor Capital program. In addition, GEP's eight local Egyptian partners include the Egyptian Junior Business Association, Nile University, the American University in Cairo, Delta Financial, and the Egyptian Business Leaders Forum and others. The local partners will work with U.S. partners in every area from training to mentoring to seeding angel investor networks.

In Egypt, the Global Entrepreneurship Program will be managed by a team of "Entrepreneurs in Residence" funded by USAID. They will grow the partnership network and the programs and partnerships offered. In Washington, GEP will be managed as an interagency team, led by the State Department's Bureau of Economic Affairs/Office of Commercial and Business Affairs. It will work together with several U.S. government agencies, principally the Department of State, Department of Commerce, USAID, OPIC, SBA, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

The effort in Egypt is just beginning, but illustrates the caliber of partners involved, the program's approach and the organizational support structure. GEP will provide expertise, tools and support for entrepreneurs that will help them to develop and flourish - spurring innovation and creating jobs and economic opportunity.

U.S. Charges 11 Somalis with Maritime Piracy

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington - "Since the earliest days of this country, piracy has been a serious crime," U.S. Attorney Neil MacBride said at an April 23 press conference in Norfolk, Virginia, where 11 Somali men are being held for trial in a federal court on charges of piracy in the Gulf of Aden.

Piracy on the world's seas threatens human lives and disrupts international commerce, MacBride said, and those who commit acts of piracy will be brought to justice.

Federal grand juries in Norfolk returned indictments against the 11 men from Somalia for maritime piracy in sea lanes in the Gulf of Aden off the Somali coast, according to MacBride's office. The men had been arrested and turned over to federal authorities in Norfolk by the U.S. Navy, which took them into custody following attacks in late March and early April.

"When pirates attack U.S. vessels by force, they must face severe consequences," McBride said.

In two separate incidents, the men attacked two U.S. Navy warships, the Nicholas and the Ashland, thinking they were attacking merchant ships. Both ships are home ported in the Norfolk area, and were participating in international counterpiracy efforts. Maritime piracy has become a significant criminal activity and threat to maritime safety off the Horn of Africa. Piracy there also threatens the flow of humanitarian aid and global commerce in one of the world's busiest shipping corridors.

The United States is partnering with the shipping industry and more than 50 nations and international organizations through the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia to carry out Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's vision of "a 21st-century solution to this 17th-century crime." This unique international partnership is contributing toward the decreasing successes of pirate attacks, most notably through a multinational naval patrol of more than 20 countries, including the United States, China, India and Russia, as well as NATO and European Union partners.

According to the first indictment, five men - Mohammed Modin Hasan, Gabul Abdullahi Ali, Abdi Wali Dire, Abdi Mohammed Gurewardher and Abdi Mohammed Umar - left Somalia in search of a merchant ship to pirate. They allegedly used two small vessels loaded with assault weapons and a rocket-propelled grenade. The small vessels served as attack boats and were accompanied by a larger vessel carrying supplies.

On March 31, three of the men - Hasan, Ali and Dire - boarded one of the smaller boats and set out to plunder what they thought was a merchant ship, but which turned out to be the USS Nicholas, a guided missile frigate, according to the federal indictment. The three men attacked the ship with their weapons, and the other two men remained on the larger ship during the attack.

In a second five-count indictment, six men - Maxamad Cali Saciid, Mohammed Abdi Jama, Jaamac Ciidle, Abdicasiis Cabaase, Abdirasaq Abshir and Mahamed Farraah Hassan - were charged with piracy involving the USS Ashland on April 10 in waters off Djibouti.

All 11 men were charged with piracy, which carries a mandatory penalty of life in prison in a federal court. The attacks were investigated by FBI agents from field offices in New York and Norfolk, and by the Norfolk field office of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service. Prosecution of the 11 men will be handled by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Norfolk.

PATROLS THWART PIRATE ATTACKS

Because of continuing international naval patrols, pirate

attacks around the world dropped by 34 per cent in the first quarter of 2010 compared with a year ago, according to a report published April 21 by the nonprofit International Maritime Bureau. The bureau cited a significant decline in attacks in the Gulf of Aden off the east coast of Somalia, where NATO ships and others patrol.

In this area alone, 17 incidents were recorded in the first three months of 2010 compared with 41 in the same period last year. Somali pirates are now expanding their reach from the Gulf of Aden to the coasts of Kenya, Tanzania, the Seychelles, Madagascar and Oman. Somali pirates carried out 35 of the 67 hijackings recorded so far in 2010.

Approximately 20,000 cargo ships a year sail to and from Egypt's Suez Canal carrying one-tenth of world trade off Somalia's east coast and the Gulf of Aden.

Ozomatli Prepares to Connect Musically with China and Mongolia

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — In the middle of a U.S. tour to promote their new album, with only a few minutes to spare before a performance in Washington, the members of the group Ozomatli had another place on their minds: China. A tour of that country and neighboring Mongolia is now confirmed for May 19 through June 5, and the Grammy Award-winning artists and veteran U.S. cultural diplomats eagerly look forward to interacting with new audiences in what are, for now, unfamiliar places.

The band's music — an energetic medley of salsa, funk, mariachi, klezmer, hip-hop, rock and much more — has earned it a wide U.S. following, and reflects the cultural and ethnic diversity of its seven members as well as the diversity of their native Los Angeles. Serving as cultural ambassadors for the State Department, Ozomatli members have taken their distinct sound and messages of peaceful coexistence to audiences in southern Africa, the Middle East, South America and — in 2009 — to Vietnam, Thailand and Burma.

Guitarist Raúl Pacheco admits that except for a short 2007 trip to perform at the Yue Festival in Shanghai and the Next Up Club in Beijing, the group knows "very little" about China, and sees the trip as an opportunity to transform what has been "this sort of mythical place" on the other side of the world into a reality shaped by personal connections and experiences.

"We want to go there and learn as much as we can about the culture, about the people, about their perspectives, from them other than what we see on the news," Pacheco

told *America.gov*. "What we see on the news is a very small proportion of reality."

Ozomatli's manager, Amy Blackman-Romero, said the group will be playing outdoor shows in Shanghai (May 21-22), Wuhan (May 24), Chengdu (May 27-28), and Beijing (May 30-June 1) before leaving for a June 4 performance in Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar.

The final show has a historic component. "No one can recall a Western band playing a free outdoor concert in Mongolia," she said. "We really dig their kind of music, too. We're definitely excited to hook up with local musicians there. Throat singers, for sure," she added.

While ticket prices kept some Chinese away from their 2007 appearances, this time the U.S. government is paying the costs, so all of the shows will be free and in outdoor public places, Blackman-Romero said.

But while the band members welcome their latest opportunity to represent the United States on the world cultural stage, "We're not here as representing the power or whatever," bassist "Wil-Dog" Abers said. "We're not part of the establishment. We're part of the undercurrent of that as human beings. That's how we find our connections."

Pacheco added, "We're just really open. We like learning about other cultures and other music. And we try to let each other be ourselves as much as possible."

When touring overseas, the band spends much of its off-stage time interacting with at-risk and handicapped youth through music workshops and other programs at schools, orphanages and hospitals. This isn't simply charity — this is where Ozomatli's members satisfy their yearning to learn from their audiences.

"Sometimes they'll show us stuff, rhythms. Sometimes they'll perform for us. Sometimes they have something completely worked out on their own and then we'll perform and then we'll invite them up to jam with us or vice versa," said Abers, who can also communicate with deaf audiences through sign language. "It's really any way to create a connection. That's what we're looking for. We'll find any way to do that."

The band hopes to repeat a 2007 visit to a migrant camp located outside Beijing, where families had left impoverished towns for temporary homes near the capital to find work opportunities and a better future for their children. Pacheco recalled a visit to the camp's school and seeing the children perform dance and music in both traditional and modern styles.

"It's just interesting to be in that situation where you

don't speak the language, you have no idea who each other are, but yet you create this blissful moment of music and just share it. It's kind of surreal and beautiful," he said.

These types of connections allow both sides to create their own story "rather than have someone else create it," Pacheco said.

Band members remembered meeting at a Burmese school with children who were deaf or blind or had other handicaps. "We walked in and there was a band of blind kids that was playing for us," percussionist Jiro Yamaguchi said.

"Blind Reality – what a great name," Blackman-Romero said, remembering how the band had motivated the physically disabled schoolchildren to dance in their wheelchairs. "They were shredding," she said. "They totally gave [Ozomatli] a run for their money."

But Yamaguchi said language ultimately does not present a barrier when the band tries to communicate with its international audiences.

"I think the energy of this band, whether we're playing in an orphanage, in a public square [or] in a club, no matter what ... the energy that we convey translates to people," he said. "The music definitely goes beyond the language."

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