

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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Governments Respond to Oil Spill in Gulf of Mexico .....	1
Statement by Secretary Clinton on World Press Freedom Day .....	2
Secretary Clinton Outlines Steps to Support Opportunities for Women .....	3
New U.S. Support for Nuclear Weapons-Free Zones and Energy Use .....	3
“Boat People” Return to Vietnam after Finding Success in America.....	5

## Governments Respond to Oil Spill in Gulf of Mexico

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — Federal, state and local officials are working aggressively to contain a major oil spill from a collapsed deep-water oil rig that is threatening beaches, marshlands and estuaries along the U.S. coast of the Gulf of Mexico.

President Obama traveled to the southeastern Louisiana coast May 2 to reassure residents and fishermen that the federal government was doing all it can to help mitigate the impact of a huge oil spill that is drifting toward the U.S. coastline. The environmental impact is expected to be massive, potentially the most damaging in U.S. history, according to government and environmental experts.

After meeting with state and local officials and receiving an update on the status of the nearly 30-mile-wide (48-kilometer-wide) oil spill, Obama told reporters that “we’re dealing with a massive and potentially unprecedented environmental disaster. The oil that is still leaking from the well could seriously damage the economy and the environment of our Gulf states and it could extend for a long time.”

BP, the oil giant with 2009 sales of \$239 billion, was leasing the Deepwater Horizon oil rig that exploded April 20. The exact cause of the explosion has not been determined. Two days later, the offshore rig collapsed into the Gulf in a section known as the Mississippi Canyon, and oil began leaking from three places. BP has been working with an array of government agencies and private companies, but has been unable to stop the flow of oil from the well. BP leased the oil rig from TransOcean Ltd., a separate company.

“BP is fully committed to taking all possible steps to contain the spread of the oil spill,” BP Group Chief Executive Tony Hayward said in a statement.

President Obama said that as soon as the oil rig fire started, federal officials began a coordinated response with state and local officials and officials from BP. An aggressive search-and-rescue mission was undertaken to evacuate the 115 people on the rig and to find 11 crew members who have not yet been found.

“When the drill unit sank on Thursday [April 22], we immediately and intensely investigated by remotely operated vehicles the entire 5,000 feet of pipe that’s on the floor of the ocean,” Obama told reporters. “In that process, three leaks were identified, the most recent coming just last Wednesday evening [April 28].”

More than 70 vessels and hundreds of thousands of feet of floating barriers have been sent to the Gulf to contain the spill. Local fishermen have also joined in laying the orange spill-containment barriers along the coast.

Admiral Thad Allen, commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, told a cable news channel May 3 that it could take as long as three months to halt the spill.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said the oil spill appears to be drifting toward the Alabama and Florida coasts in addition to the Louisiana coastline.

“While we have prepared and reacted aggressively, I’m not going to rest ... or be satisfied until the leak is stopped at the source, the oil on the Gulf is contained and cleaned up, and the people of this region are able to go back to their lives and their livelihoods,” Obama said.

“The most advanced technology available is being used to try and stop a leak that is more than 5,000 feet under the surface,” the president added. “Because this leak is unique and unprecedented, it could take many days to stop.”

NOAA issued a precautionary closure of the federal waters off the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and part of Florida for 10 days. Local seafood-industry executives offered their support of the temporary halt to fishing in the federal waters in the interests of protecting consumers. The decision does not affect state waters or the remainder of the Gulf.

NOAA indicated May 2 that the oil slick was about nine miles (14.5 kilometers) off the Louisiana coastline, but the movement of the massive slick is not completely predictable because it is controlled by the wind and tides in the Gulf.

While officials at the scene from the Coast Guard, Homeland Security, Department of the Interior, and state agencies briefed the president and consulted on next steps, BP engineers were working to slow the spread of the oil spill while work was beginning on measures to cap the wellhead and halt the three leaks.

Measures include using chemical dispersants, though it is unknown what the impact might be on the deepwater ecology; placing huge orange booms closer to land to block the oil slick; and training volunteers on how best to minimize the impact of oil as it reaches beaches along the coast. BP engineers are working on plans to cap one of the three leaks with a shut-off valve and lower containment domes over the other two. All of these measures could be put in place over the next week to 10 days using robotic submersibles tied to support ships 5,000 feet (1,524

meters) above on the surface.

BP was also planning to sink two relief wells to help siphon off the oil that is leaking into the Gulf, but that could take several weeks, company officials told the news media.

#### FUTURE OF OFFSHORE DRILLING

The oil spill comes a month after the president announced that he would not continue a moratorium blocking offshore drilling along the United States coastline. Presidential adviser David Axelrod told ABC Television's Good Morning America on April 30 that no offshore drilling in new areas will be permitted until a full investigation and analysis of the current crisis is completed.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said May 2 that moving ahead on offshore drilling will require a balancing act. "That is a national security concern because we have to do better to lessen our dependence on foreign oil. But it has to be done safely. It can't be done at the risk of having to spend billions of dollars cleaning up these spills," she said on NBC Television's Meet the Press.

Obama ordered Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to conduct a complete investigation of what happened in the Gulf oil spill and report back to him in 30 days, White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said as the president was en route to Louisiana.

#### **Statement by Secretary Clinton on World Press Freedom Day**

*U.S. committed to working with media to defend freedom of expression*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Office of the Spokesman  
May 3, 2010

#### STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE CLINTON

##### World Press Freedom Day

The United States joins the international community in celebrating World Press Freedom Day. A free press is essential to an empowered citizenry, government accountability and responsible economic development. Wherever independent media are under threat, accountable governance and human freedom are undermined.

Courageous journalists across the globe risk their freedom and their lives to provide independent information on government actions and their consequences; report the news from conflict zones; expose crime, corruption and

wrongdoing; and reveal human rights violations – all despite efforts, in some cases, by governments and others, to control what people read, hear and think.

For exercising the right to free expression, journalists and bloggers are too often targeted for harassment, intimidation, arrest, physical attack and even murder, often at the hands of unknown assailants who act with impunity. In November 2009, President Obama applauded the efforts of Cuban blogger Yoani Sanchez to "empower fellow Cubans to express themselves through the use of technology" and said that her blog "provides the world a unique window into the realities of daily life in Cuba." That same month she and two fellow bloggers were forcibly detained by plain clothes security personnel while en route to a peaceful demonstration, and she and one of her companions were beaten. Also in 2009, Burmese freelance journalist Hla Hla Win was sentenced to 27 years in prison on trumped-up charges based on nothing more than interviewing monks in commemoration of the Saffron Revolution. And Natalya Estemirova, an independent journalist from Russia who was known for her fearless reporting on human rights violations in Chechnya was kidnapped and murdered. In total, 71 journalists were killed last year, many murdered with impunity.

Governments in every region of the world apply restrictive laws and regulations and other controls on media freedom. These restrictions often extend beyond traditional print and broadcast media to new forms of electronic communications through the Internet and other new technologies. The State Department's human rights report detailed our concerns about these practices.

Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights is as relevant in our globalized Information Age as it was when it was adopted over six decades ago: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." The United States is committed to working in partnership with members of the media, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other concerned governments to defend freedom of expression and the brave journalists who are persecuted for exercising it on the challenging new terrain of the 21st century.

## Secretary Clinton Outlines Steps to Support Opportunities for Women

*Tells women entrepreneurs they are essential to meet global challenges*

By Susan Domowitz  
Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told women entrepreneurs from around the world that they are essential partners in global efforts to increase peace, prosperity, stability and security.

“We need each and every one of you to lend your entrepreneurial skill and energy to meeting the global challenges of this new century,” she said.

Clinton, speaking at an April 28 breakfast in Washington for women entrepreneurs who participated in the two-day Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship April 26–27, said talent is universal but opportunity is not, and assured them the United States will be a partner in “trying to pry open those doors of opportunity.”

Clinton outlined four initiatives to expand opportunities for women, so “more women can turn their entrepreneurial dreams and innovations into successful businesses that generate income for themselves and their families, create jobs, expand markets and fuel progress in their communities.”

First, through a program called Tech Women, promising women entrepreneurs in technology fields in seven Muslim-majority countries will be paired with American mentors and given four to six weeks of training in American technology centers like Silicon Valley in California.

Second, the United States will work with Japan, the 2010 chair of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, to organize an APEC women’s entrepreneurship summit in the fall of 2010 in Japan. That summit will focus on policy, human resources and financing issues.

Third, the Secretary’s International Fund for Women and Girls is a new public-private partnership aimed at providing high-impact grants to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working to advance the economic, social and political progress of women.

“The women’s fund will bring together the resources and expertise of both the public and the private sectors to invest in effective and innovative solutions for issues like economic empowerment, climate change, combating violence against women, and improved access to education and health care,” Clinton said.

The fourth initiative is the Secretary’s Innovation Award

for the Empowerment of Women and Girls. The award, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, will recognize pioneering approaches to empower women politically, economically and socially around the world. The first two recipients each will receive a grant of up to \$500,000 to implement programs that can improve the lives of women and girls, and that can be expanded to be applied more broadly.

As an example, Clinton recollected “being in Senegal and going out into the country to see a new kind of well that made it possible for women to get water in their own village instead of having to walk for hours. We’re working on a cook-stove project so that we can provide safe and effective cook stoves for women so they don’t have to travel for miles to get trees and branches and look for scrub to light their stoves to feed their families.”

Clinton introduced Rockefeller Foundation President Judith Rodin, who said that identifying innovation, expanding that innovation, and applying it to seemingly intractable problems has proven to be very effective.

“We all know the facts,” Rodin said. “Women still do two-thirds of the work in the world but only earn 5 percent of the income. They harvest 90 percent of the world’s food, yet they own only 1 percent of the world’s land. And women are three times as likely as men to work in informal economies. And therefore abuse and sex trafficking and the absence of legal rights and protections for women are still unacceptably commonplace in so many places around the world. We must do more and we must do more with greater urgency to empower women. And we believe that a focus on scalable innovation can and will make a difference.”

Clinton urged her audience to return to their home countries with a renewed sense of commitment and optimism.

“I hope you will carry with you ... a commitment to use your skill and energy to contribute to the growth and progress of your families, your communities and your countries because ... I really believe that, together as women, we can and will help create a stronger, more stable, more secure, more prosperous, more peaceful world for ourselves and our children.”

## New U.S. Support for Nuclear Weapons-Free Zones and Energy Use

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington – Countries gathered at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference must decide if the 21st century will be a time that sees the continued spread of nuclear weapons or a period that helps realize

the vision of a world without them, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said May 3.

Speaking at the United Nations at the start of the month-long conference, Clinton said the United States "will do its part" to fulfill its obligations under the NPT and is taking concrete steps both toward nuclear disarmament and to help other countries access the benefits of peaceful nuclear energy.

The secretary announced that the Obama administration is calling on the U.S. Senate to ratify protocols for U.S. participation in and support for nuclear weapons-free zones that have been established by treaties in Africa and the South Pacific.

"Upon ratification, parties to those agreements will have a legally binding assurance that the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them and will fully respect the nuclear weapons-free status of the zones," Clinton said.

Although the United States is not eligible to be a party to either treaty, it can join the treaty protocols that are open to it and other nuclear-armed states. Under those protocols, the United States pledges not to test nuclear weapons within the weapons-free zones, and offers legally binding assurances that it will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against treaty signatories.

The United States has observed a moratorium on nuclear testing since 1992, and has no plans to resume testing, U.S. officials said in April. Under its revised Nuclear Posture Review, the Obama administration committed April 6 not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states that comply with the NPT.

According to a May 3 State Department fact sheet, the United States signed the protocols for the Treaty of Pelindaba and the Treaty of Rarotonga, which established the nuclear weapons free-zones in, respectively, Africa and the South Pacific in 1996. It had previously signed and ratified the protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established a nuclear weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean, the fact sheet said.

Clinton said the Obama administration is also prepared to consult with countries in Central and Southeast Asia to reach an agreement to seek ratification for protocols to establish those regions as nuclear weapons-free zones. The United States is also "prepared to support practical measures" that will help achieve a similar objective for the Middle East, which Clinton said "may present the greatest threat of nuclear proliferation in the world today."

To honor its commitments under the NPT to move

toward nuclear disarmament, the United States is taking "irreversible, transparent, verifiable steps to reduce the number of the nuclear weapons in our arsenal," she said.

She announced that for the first time the United States is making public the number of weapons in its nuclear stockpile, as well as the number of weapons it has dismantled since 1991.

"For those who doubt that the United States will do its part on disarmament, this is our record, these are our commitments. And they send a clear, unmistakable signal," she said.

#### MORE U.S. SUPPORT FOR PEACEFUL NUCLEAR POWER

Clinton also announced that the United States is boosting its unequivocal support for NPT-compliant states to have access to peaceful nuclear energy by contributing \$50 million over the next five years to the new "Peaceful Uses Initiative" of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). She said the initiative will "improve health care and nutrition, manage water resources, increase food security and help countries develop the infrastructure for the safe and secure use of nuclear power."

The secretary said that over the past 10 years, the United States has been the largest contributor to the IAEA's technical cooperation fund, providing it with nearly \$200 million. The fund has helped more than 100 countries develop or expand peaceful nuclear energy uses, she said.

IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano told the NPT Review Conference May 3 that his organization is now implementing technical cooperation projects in more than 120 countries and territories and urged more international support to achieve "sufficient, assured and predictable funding of technical cooperation."

He said more than 60 countries are considering introducing nuclear power to generate electricity, and that between 10 and 25 new countries are expected to bring their first nuclear power plants online by 2030.

"Nuclear technology provides a unique tool to meet the basic needs of human beings," Amano said. Nuclear medicine and radiotherapy can be used to diagnose and treat cancer, and nuclear technology can be used to enhance global food security by contributing to plant breeding, food irradiation, animal health and pest control, as well as water management and environmental monitoring, he said.

The IAEA can help interested countries to establish a reliable nuclear infrastructure, but any expansion in nuclear power "must be done safely and securely and

without increasing the proliferation risk," Amano said.

### **"Boat People" Return to Vietnam after Finding Success in America**

By Andrew Lam  
Special Correspondent

San Francisco — Nguyen Qui Duc, a Vietnamese refugee who became an American radio host and the author of the memoir *Where the Ashes Are*, has found yet another incarnation in his mid-50s: Bar owner and art curator in Hanoi, Vietnam. Why would he come back to the country from which he once fled? "Home is where there's a sense of connection, of family, of community," he said after struggling to find a single answer. "And I found it here."

Duc is one of nearly 500,000 *Viet Kieu* — Vietnamese living overseas — who return to Vietnam yearly, many only to visit relatives, but others increasingly to work, invest and retire. The majority of the people who return are from the United States, where the largest Vietnamese population overseas resides. Indeed, 35 years after the Vietnam War ended, the Vietnamese diaspora is now falling slowly, but surely, back into Vietnam's orbit.

#### INCREASING TIES BETWEEN VIET KIEU AND HOME

Not long ago, a Vietnamese overseas had little more than nostalgic memories to keep cultural ties alive. During the Cold War, letters sent from the United States could take half a year to reach their recipients in Vietnam. Today, however, 15 years after the United States normalized diplomatic ties with Vietnam, and three years after Vietnam joined the World Trade Organization, Hanoi is but an 18-hour flight from Los Angeles, and Vietnamese at home and overseas chat online, text message one another, talk on Skype or call each other on the cell phone. Tourism from Vietnam to the United States, too, is increasingly the norm. Hanoi is even considering granting dual citizenship to the *Viet Kieu* to spur further repatriation.

Vietnamese overseas are playing an important role in Vietnam's economic life. According to Vietnam's Chamber of Commerce, in 2008, despite the slowdown in the world economy, Vietnam received overseas aid of more than \$7.4 billion. The Vietnamese government said that the diaspora is reducing poverty and spurring economic development. Official development assistance pledged to Vietnam in 2008 by international donors was \$5 billion; the overseas population contributed \$2.4 billion more.

"But the overseas influence on Vietnam is for more than just remittances," said Duy Tran, a *Viet Kieu* businessman visiting Vietnam from Los Angeles. Nguyen who was once a "boat person," a common term for Vietnamese

refugees in the 1970s, said he left Vietnam because his cousin sent home photos of her new life in America showing sports cars and high-rise buildings and wealth Vietnamese Americans. "I followed her footsteps. I knew if she could become successful, so could I."

*Vuot bien*, the Vietnamese phrase meaning to escape or to cross the border, became a household word in the 1980s, Nguyen said. "Everyone wanted to *vuot bien* and come to America." Now? "Now," he said, laughing, "now I'm back to invest in real estate."

#### THE NEXT BIG OPPORTUNITY

The irony is that in the 21st century many are now looking at Vietnam as the next big investment opportunity. Vietnam's economy is second only to China in term of growth in Asia. Victor Luu, who fled Vietnam a day before Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) fell to communist tanks on April 30, 1975, has become a successful software engineer who participated in several start-up companies in California's Silicon Valley. In 2006, he returned to his hometown and founded Siglaz, a software company with more than 50 employees. In his new office in a tall building in an area near the airport called E-Town, Luu could see the runway from which his plane full of panicked refugees took off 35 years ago. "I fully believe in Vietnam," Luu said. "The future is here. And I want to help it happen."

Diep Vuong, a cum laude graduate of Harvard University with a degree in economics, left Vietnam as a boat person in 1979, but came back five years ago to help fight against human trafficking in her home province, An Giang in the Mekong Delta.

As the rich-poor gap in Vietnam has widened considerably with the growth of Vietnam's economy, human trafficking has become a problem. Vuong's programs are part of the Pacific Links Foundation effort to empower young women, provide education, skill training, scholarship and shelter to those at risk. "Increasingly, Vietnamese Americans are playing central roles in the philanthropy sector," she said. "As for me, I can't just sit and do nothing. Any of those girls being sold to Cambodia or China could be a cousin, or a child of an old friend."

Yet there's another form of *Viet Kieu* contribution that is not so tangible, but arguably just as important. Nguyen Qui Duc's bar, Tadioto, a three-story narrow, tube house on Hang Bong Street in Hanoi, has become a gathering place for artists and writers and intellectuals — expatriates and locals alike. Avant garde arts pieces hang on the wall or stand alone in the middle of rooms, including a green mannequin lying in an open glass coffin reminiscent of Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum. "Public space

is not yet what it should be in Vietnam," Duc explained. "I'm aiming to change that – to bring real dialogue between different people."

Each week at Duc's bar, Vietnamese-American poets and writers share their experiences with their Vietnamese counterparts. And with more *Viet Kieu* coming home to work and invest, that dialogue will continue only to grow and spur the new direction of the country.

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