

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Obama Drug Strategy: Prevention to Reduce Demand

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration's new drug strategy aims at shrinking the demand for illegal narcotics inside the United States, partly in recognition of how organized crime is profiting from the drug trade, while also pursuing partnerships with other countries.

Speaking in Washington May 11, Gil Kerlikowske, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), said he and other Obama administration officials recognize the "imperative" of reducing U.S. drug consumption, and that the United States is "strongly committed to implementing a balanced strategy" in efforts to stem the flow and use of illegal drugs.

"Much of the organized crime is in fact outside [U.S.] borders, and we address that responsibility directly through the strong emphasis that we are placing on both prevention and treatment here at home," he said.

The national drug strategy puts more resources into prevention and treatment, including support for community-based anti-drug programs and efforts by health care providers to screen for drug problems before users become addicted. It also expands drug treatment beyond specialty centers into more mainstream health care facilities.

According to the strategy's executive summary, the emphasis on preventing drug use before it starts is "a cost-effective, common-sense way to build safe and healthy communities," citing research on adolescent brain development that shows "those who reach the age of 21 without developing an addiction are very unlikely to do so afterward."

The plan calls for reducing the rate of youth drug use in the U.S. by 15 percent by 2015, as well as similar reductions in the areas of chronic drug use, drug-induced deaths, and driving under the influence of drugs.

To strengthen international partnerships, the plan calls for joint law enforcement operations and the promotion of alternative livelihoods for coca and opium farmers throughout the world.

People and societies throughout the world "pay an immense toll" due to drug use, Kerlikowske said. The new U.S. drug-control strategy will not only help state and local governments inside the United States develop their own drug strategies, but can also provide assistance to other countries confronting the challenge.

"We invite the international partners to share in the lessons that the United States has learned about responding to drug use. Drug-treatment courts, community anti-drug coalitions in particular, can be very helpful," he said.

The ONDCP director cited a U.S. partnership with Mexican authorities in 2009 to open the country's first drug court in Monterrey, profiting from 20 years of experience in the United States in which the courts have helped reintegrate those involved in drug use back into U.S. society.

"The other thing that we learned, certainly from Mexico, is the number of prevention programs and the kits that they have put together for schoolchildren within that country to help them," he said.

He also pointed to U.S. funding for more than 700 community coalitions that provide local training and education to discourage drug use, and said those kinds of programs "can be successful to our foreign partners."

"The people that do that training have now traveled to a variety of countries in South America to talk about how you can build at the grass-roots level, at the community level, the prevention programs and a resistance to drug use that in the long run make cities and towns safer and, of course, make all of us safer here," he said.

In addition, the United States can provide technical assistance for drug treatment, interdiction, investigations and law enforcement cooperation, he said.

Kerlikowske said the Obama administration views drug use more as a public-safety and public-health problem than a criminal matter that emphasizes punishment and incarceration.

"We've been talking about a war on drugs for over 40 years. I don't think the American public sees a huge level of success — not that there hasn't been some — in a war on drugs. Calling it a war really limits your resources, and essentially the greatest resource in a war is some type of force," he said.

"We need to have a balanced and comprehensive approach to dealing with this rather than just the criminal-justice lens," the director said, and those are "the voices that you see reflected ... in President Obama's strategy."

President Obama Offers Support for Afghan Peace Jirga

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama expressed support for the Afghan government's planned consultative peace *jirga* aimed at discussing how to reconcile Taliban fighters with the rest of the country, describing the national council as "an important milestone that America supports."

Speaking alongside Afghan President Hamid Karzai at the White House May 12 after their meeting, Obama said the United States supports efforts to "open the door" to Taliban fighters who are willing to cut their ties to al-Qaida and other extremist groups, renounce violence, and accept the Afghan constitution, including respect for human rights and women's rights.

"President Karzai should be able to work to reintegrate those individuals into Afghan society," Obama said. Emphasizing the need for an Afghan-led effort, the president added that the peace *jirga* would create a framework to move toward that reconciliation.

The *jirga*, scheduled for May 29, is expected to attract 1,500 Afghan men and women representing political, tribal, business and civil society communities. The goal, according to a May 12 commentary by Karzai published in the Washington Post, is to "chart a way forward for engaging those who fight against us."

Obama said a political component is ultimately needed to achieve Afghan peace and stability. "This is not just going to be a military solution," he said.

The peace *jirga*, as well as a July donors conference in Kabul, sends a strong message of the Afghan government's "commitment to rule of law and good governance and human rights and women's rights," and as the government gains more confidence from the Afghan people, "their fear of the Taliban weakens," he said.

But the president added that the military component remains necessary to break the momentum of the Taliban and create additional incentives for their fighters to make peace with the Afghan government.

"At what point do the Taliban start making different calculations about what's in their interests?" Obama said. "How the Afghan people feel about these issues is in part going to be dependent on our success in terms of carrying out our mission there."

The president said the United States will continue to work with Afghan and international partners to "do everything

in our power to avoid actions that harm the Afghan people" as military efforts by Afghan forces and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) continue against the insurgents.

Although the Taliban are responsible for most of the innocent civilian deaths in Afghanistan, Obama said he and ISAF commander General Stanley McChrystal are "ultimately accountable" for civilian casualties caused by coalition military operations and "we do not take that lightly."

Coalition forces are putting themselves at risk to reduce civilian casualties, and that is "a burden we're willing to bear," he said, but "mistakes are going to be made."

Karzai said he and Obama discussed the "ways and means" of protecting civilians and acknowledged "considerable progress" since the arrival of McChrystal as ISAF commander.

Karzai welcomed President Obama's commitment to transfer the responsibility for detention facilities to the Afghan government, saying he considered it "a major point of progress in our conversations."

According to a May 12 joint statement by the two leaders, the transfer will begin in January 2011 with the Parwan detention facility, and the United States will continue to assist the Afghan government in building "safe, secure and humane corrections systems."

"Both presidents recognized that a successful transition will be an important milestone toward achieving President Karzai's inaugural pledge of having the Afghan Government assume full responsibility over detention operations," the statement said, adding that President Obama had "emphasized his strong desire to see all search, arrest and detention operations be carried out by the Afghan National Security Forces."

In his remarks, President Obama acknowledged that President Karzai has made progress in improving governance in Afghanistan, but said both leaders agreed that "much more work needs to be done."

Obama pledged that the United States will "sustain a robust commitment" toward the country as the Afghan government assumes more security responsibility, and he welcomed the large delegation of Afghan ministers and officials who had come to Washington for the bilateral talks.

"The presence here today of so many leaders from both our governments underscores how we can partner across a full range of areas, including development and agriculture, education and health, rule of law and

women's rights," Obama said. "Together, we can unleash Afghanistan's vast potential."

Secretary Clinton: Americas' Focus Is on Trade, Security, Inequality

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the United States is focused on three significant policy areas for the Western Hemisphere: trade and energy security, public security, and inequality and immigration.

"I am committed to doing everything I can to have this hemisphere be a model and to combine our strengths, overcome our weaknesses, work in a real spirit of partnership and friendship, and I welcome your thoughts and ideas about how we in the Obama administration can be more successful in doing that," Clinton said in remarks May 12 at the opening of the 40th Washington Conference on the Americas.

"We have a lot to be proud of in this hemisphere. But I'm not satisfied and I don't think that any of us should be, because there is still a big agenda before us," Clinton said.

The Council of the Americas' Washington Conference is an annual forum for government and business leaders from across the Western Hemisphere to discuss the hemispheric political and economic agenda. The international businesses represented include a broad spectrum of sectors in banking and finance, consulting, consumer products, media, technology and transportation.

The gross domestic product numbers for the region indicate that "Latin America is doing better than average" as the global economy continues recovering from the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s, Clinton said in her opening remarks. Trade and energy security are viewed as integral to the continued prosperity of the region, she added.

"Our commitment to trade is one that we feel strongly about. We just have to deal with the political winds and we need more help from the private sector," Clinton said. President Obama has asked Congress to approve several free trade agreements including agreements with Panama and Colombia. "We need more strong advocacy on behalf of the importance of trade and why it is good for the United States and American workers," she said.

One of the stumbling blocks for free trade agreements in Congress has been a concern that they result in U.S. jobs leaving and Latin American nations gaining, but Clinton said these trade agreements strengthen employment

opportunities for U.S. workers and workers across the region.

Clinton said the Obama administration has also made commitments to energy security, the pursuit of new forms of energy and the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas.

"We believe that we can do so much more on both energy and climate," Clinton said. "The United States is prepared to invest government funds to solicit private-sector funds to try to develop the energy sectors."

In particular, the United States is concerned that many countries in the Caribbean and Central America are dependent on imported oil at a significant cost to their economies, she said.

Public security remains a challenge throughout the region, Clinton said, but especially so in Central America and Mexico.

"We need smarter, more effective strategies to deal with this continuing threat to civil society, to governmental legitimacy," she said.

Clinton said there are the questions posed by inequality and by immigration. While positive economic growth is welcome, income disparity continues to grow in the region, she said.

"That is a source of social and political instability. It feeds a lot of the criminal activity that unfortunately is now dominated by the traffickers of drugs and arms and people," Clinton said. The United States is working with governments and the private sector to increase economic opportunity, and it must be at the core of everything, she said.

Sustainable growth cannot be produced without economic opportunity being more broadly spread, Clinton said. A significant part of the solution is a strong and enduring partnership between government and the private sector, she added.

United States Imposes Sanctions on Two Terrorist Leaders

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States imposed financial sanctions on two leaders of a Yemen-based terrorist group known as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), a loose affiliate of the transnational al-Qaida group that engineered the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on Washington and New York.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton designated the two AQAP leaders – Qasim al-Rimi and Nayif al-Qahtani – as terrorists on May 11, P.J. Crowley, assistant secretary of state for public affairs, said in a prepared statement. Clinton made the terrorist designation April 6, but it could not be applied before it was published in the *Federal Register*, an official U.S. government record.

“Today’s designations of Qasim al-Rimi and Nayif al-Qahtani directly respond to the threats posed to the United States – and U.S. interests in the Arabian Peninsula – by AQAP and its senior leaders,” Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, the State Department’s counterterrorism coordinator, said. “These cases illustrate our determination to pursue AQAP and undermine AQAP senior leaders’ planning and coordination capabilities.”

The United States designated AQAP a foreign terrorist organization in January and approved financial and travel sanctions against its two primary senior leaders, Nasir al-Wahishi and Said al-Shihri.

Al-Rimi is AQAP’s senior military commander and played a critical role in reviving the regional al-Qaida affiliate.

“In 2007, he and AQAP Emir Nasir al-Wahishi announced the emergence of al-Qaida in Yemen (AQY), AQAP’s predecessor group,” Crowley said. In addition to his activities as AQAP’s senior military commander, al-Rimi has played an important role in recruiting the current generation of militants making up AQAP.

Al-Qahtani was included in the terrorist designation because of his role as liaison between al-Qaida cells that operate clandestinely in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, Crowley said.

Al-Qahtani also manages AQAP operations in Yemen and receives financial support for attacks against targets in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, Crowley said. “In addition to planning, financing, and overseeing terrorist attacks in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, some of which have targeted U.S. interests in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Qahtani also serves as a key spokesperson for AQAP,” he added.

The main al-Qaida group is believed to be in hiding in the rugged mountain range that separates Afghanistan and Pakistan along with the remnants of the Taliban regime that controlled Afghanistan before its expulsion by a U.S.-led coalition in late 2001.

The U.N. Sanctions Committee, created by the Security Council’s Resolution 1267, added both men to its Consolidated List of individuals associated with al-Qaida and the Taliban on May 11. The U.N. action will require

all of its members to implement an assets freeze, a travel ban and an arms embargo against these individuals.

Terrorism experts believe that eliminating or severely restricting sources of financing for these types of groups provides an effective long-term measure that can thwart the group’s future actions and choke off its access to outside support.

“The actions taken today against AQAP leadership support the U.S. effort to degrade the capabilities of this group,” Crowley said. “We are determined to eliminate AQAP’s ability to execute violent attacks and to disrupt, dismantle and defeat their networks.”

U.S.-Asia Economic Relationship Vital, Says Top Trade Official

USTR Kirk cites commitment to expanding trade cooperation with Asia

By Andrew Malandrino
Staff Writer

Washington – The United States seeks “to refresh and refine [its] commitment to economic prosperity for the people of every Pacific nation,” U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk said May 6.

Speaking at the seventh annual U.S.-Asia Pacific Council conference in Washington, Kirk, whose office develops U.S. international trade policy and conducts international trade negotiations, cited the vital importance of East Asia and the Pacific region to the U.S. domestic economy and the global economy, and affirmed the high value the Obama administration places on its relationships with regional trading partners.

As host of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in 2011, the United States is working closely with 2010 host Japan “to achieve concrete and significant deliverables for this year that will set the stage for ambitious results in 2011,” Kirk said. “APEC 2011 has the potential to be [a] watershed moment in U.S. economic engagement in the Asia-Pacific, so we are going to be both bold and aggressive when we host.”

The USTR said the United States intends to:

- Advance trade and investment issues to build 21st-century trade agreements.
- Improve the transparency and accessibility of APEC member economies’ customs information.
- Address barriers to trade and investment in environmental goods and services.

These goals, Kirk said, are central to President Obama’s desire to “articulate a trans-Pacific agenda for shared peace and prosperity.” Toward this end, the United States

is “pursuing a new formal trade agreement with the Trans-Pacific Partnership ... to build what will become the largest, most dynamic trade collaboration” of the 21st century.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership is a multilateral free-trade zone created in 2006 by Singapore, New Zealand, Brunei and Chile. Vietnam, Australia and Peru joined in 2008. On November 14, 2009, President Obama announced U.S. intentions to engage with the group and improve regional economic integration.

Kirk said President Obama wants the proposed partnership to be the United States’ first 21st-century trade agreement, one that will “create more opportunities for small- and medium-sized enterprises, while also giving priority to labor and environmental protections and fostering development.”

“The outcomes of APEC 2010 and APEC 2011, and the decisions we make in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, will have a dramatic impact” on whether trade relations within APEC are balanced and sustainable 50 years from now, Kirk said. “We are approaching a dynamic moment in this growing relationship, and there is much work to be done.”

In 2011, when the United States hosts the APEC forum in Hawaii, the United States “plans to leverage this unique opportunity to demonstrate America’s commitment to playing a stronger and more constructive role in the Asia-Pacific region, including on crucial trade and investment topics,” Kirk said.

“We also see APEC 2011 as an opportunity to tell our story on trade, and educate people about the benefits of exports to our economic growth and our ability to grow jobs, and the importance of staying engaged with the Asia-Pacific.”

Kirk also affirmed the U.S. commitment to expanding trade with Asia under President Obama’s National Export Initiative (NEI). Obama, who announced the initiative during his 2010 State of the Union address, aims to double U.S. exports within five years. More than 60 percent of U.S. exports go to the Asia-Pacific region, and the Asia-Pacific region as a whole accounts for more than half of global gross domestic product.

U.S. Dancers Forge East-West Connection

ODC dance troupe visits Indonesia, Burma, Thailand

By Lauren Monsen
Staff Writer

Washington — Since its inception in 1971, the ODC (Oberlin Dance Collective) company has been hailed for its imaginative choreography and bold aesthetic vision, so

the prospect of traveling to Southeast Asia under the U.S. State Department’s DanceMotion U.S.A. program appealed strongly to the troupe’s adventurous spirit, says Brenda Way, ODC’s founder and artistic director.

The dance company, which began as a collective of artists at Oberlin College in Ohio, migrated to San Francisco in 1976 and quickly evolved into one of the leading dance organizations in the United States. Asked to participate in DanceMotion U.S.A.’s cultural exchange mission, the ODC set off in January for a 28-day trip to Indonesia, Burma and Thailand, hoping to establish a rapport with dancers, students and audiences in all three countries.

According to Way, the result was “a partnership in creativity” between ODC dancers and their Southeast Asian colleagues, and the experience was “extraordinarily satisfying.” ODC dancers worked with local dancers at each stop on their itinerary, “and we taught them our dance moves and our compositional methods, drawing movement from everyday activities,” Way said. “We learned some of their traditional dances, as well.”

As they navigated a busy schedule of workshops, master classes and public performances, the U.S. dancers found much to admire in their host countries, Way recalled. The American visitors discovered that “dance, theater and visual culture are very important in Indonesia,” where the ancient arts of wayang kulit (shadow puppet) theater and topeng (masked) dance-drama are widely practiced, said Way. In Jakarta, ODC dancers were given a private tour of a puppet museum, where they saw beautifully designed, intricate puppets — all handmade by master carvers.

Also, “we discovered that Thailand is an age-integrated culture,” Way said. “Elsewhere, our classes were heavily focused on college-age students, but in Thailand, we had students ranging from 4 years old all the way up to college kids.” Older, more advanced Thai students were remarkably patient with very young beginners, and the sense of community between students of varying ages and skill levels “was heartwarming.”

Traveling in Burma was perhaps the most challenging part of the tour. “Because Burma has been isolated for awhile, we encountered some antipathy from the rulers, but not from the citizens,” Way said. “We were apparently shadowed the whole time” by the regime’s security forces, “which we expected.” However, “the junta’s attitude didn’t dampen the curiosity and enthusiasm of the Burmese people.”

“When we were in Burma, we learned the 15 basic Burmese steps — a consolidation of different dances from around the country — and the Burmese people responded to us with an incredible generosity and sweetness,” she

said. "We had a fantastic communication with artists and students. At the end of our dance concerts, we introduced ourselves in Burmese. We were so warmly received, and for us, it was thrilling. It was a profound experience to be there."

While ODC dancers were absorbing the cultural nuances of each country they visited, their hosts were equally interested in the customs of their American guests, said Way.

She remembered, in particular, a scholarly writer in the Burmese capital of Rangoon who said he observed several differences between the U.S. dancers and their Burmese peers. "He said our costumes gave us total freedom of movement, and that we had expansive command of space," said Way. "He also said we were very expressive in our faces, and that we demonstrated a clear intimacy between men and women. And he cited a fusion in the movements and gestures of ballet, hip-hop, modern and classical Indian dance in our technique."

Throughout their travels, ODC dancers established a bond with audiences and fellow dancers, said Way. "After our performances, we talked to the people in attendance," she said. "They asked all sorts of questions, such as 'How long does it take you to choreograph a dance routine?' and they didn't want us to leave; they wanted to extend the relationship." The ODC dancers are nurturing these new friendships by staying in touch with their Southeast Asian hosts, Way said.

"In Jakarta, we performed in a fantastic compound, and I'd like to encourage a visit [to San Francisco] by the head of that theater," she added. "And we recently received a big box of gifts from a dance instructor in Thailand, which included books on Thai dance." ODC dancers would love to revisit their three host countries, she said. "We'd go back there in a heartbeat!"

Way offered her thoughts about why dance endures as a popular art form in both Eastern and Western cultures. "The power of the body is an optimistic statement. Dancing says, 'yes, we can,'" she explained. "The act of dancing is vigorous and positive, and it can express surprising truths that fly in the face of conventional wisdom. Women are physically powerful, and men are poetic. Dancing reveals that."

Overseas Suppliers to Benefit from Increased U.S. Exports

By Warner Rose
Special Correspondent

Washington — When U.S. exports increase, America's trading partners also benefit because U.S. companies usually include imported parts in their products,

supporters of free trade say.

"It's very hard in today's world to expand exports without expanding imports at the same time," said William Reinsch, president of the National Foreign Trade Council.

In the new "global-supply-chain world," U.S. companies are increasing their purchases of parts and inputs from foreign suppliers, taking advantage of reduced trade barriers, Reinsch said.

Despite a dearth of hard numbers, anecdotal evidence indicates the foreign content of U.S. exports is significant. For example, the parts for Apple's iPod music player come from many overseas sources, including Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Taiwan, according to a 2008 study by three University of California professors. The gadget itself is assembled in China.

While the United States continues to export large amounts of finished goods, minerals and agricultural products, it is increasingly becoming a services and innovation economy, according to economists. This means that intellectual input — such as the product design or patented software — becomes the most valuable U.S. contribution to the product, Reinsch said. An example of this again is the iPod. Apple Inc. contributed the concept, the design and the software — all patented intellectual property. The most expensive foreign-made part is a hard drive supplied by the Japanese company Toshiba at \$73 each. Apple earned \$80 on each \$299 iPod, more than any other company involved in its production, the study said.

When President Obama announced the National Export Initiative in January with the goal of doubling U.S. exports over five years, he called the innovation, ingenuity and creativity of the American people the greatest U.S. asset. Obama said the United States needs to generate more growth from exports and rely less on domestic consumption for its economic health.

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND EXPORTS

Opinions vary on whether the president's goals of doubling U.S. exports over five years and creating 2 million U.S. jobs can be achieved. It took 12 years for U.S. exports of goods and services to double to \$1.64 trillion in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's foreign trade statistics. Exports have declined slightly since, totaling \$1.55 trillion in 2009.

Frank Vargo, vice president for international economic affairs at the National Association of Manufacturers, said Obama's goals will be difficult to achieve. Foremost, Vargo said, the administration needs to return to the policy of negotiating and enacting new free trade

agreements. "Only 40 percent of our exports are covered by free trade agreements now," he said.

Obama vowed to seek congressional approval of the Panama, Colombia and South Korean free trade accords negotiated by the Bush administration and move forcefully on the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership, an initiative to integrate the economies of the Asia-Pacific region.

The most important factors that will determine whether the export initiative will succeed are the rate of economic growth in importing countries – the faster they grow, the better chance of success – and the exchange rate of the U.S. currency. A less expensive dollar boosts U.S. exports. But the U.S. government has little or no control over these factors. For example, Washington has pressed China to move toward a more market-oriented exchange rate and let its currency appreciate. That would make U.S. goods and services less expensive in China. Yet Beijing has adjusted its currency policy only slightly in recent years.

The U.S. government can boost U.S. sales overseas by giving full support to U.S. exporters, experts say. Obama said that is a major part of his export initiative, particularly in regard to small and medium-size firms, which often lack the resources or the experience to enter overseas markets.

The president has called for reforming the export controls system, which restricts sales of high-tech products for national security reasons. Exporters say the cumbersome Cold War-era licensing process discourages companies from selling goods overseas and puts them at a disadvantage against their foreign rivals.

But with elections in November and other matters already on the agenda, Congress is unlikely to act on the issue before 2011, said Catherine Robinson, director of export controls at the National Association of Manufacturers.

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