

American

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Summary of President Obama's Call with South Korean President Lee

Leaders discuss bilateral issues; plan to meet at G-20 meeting in Canada

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
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Readout of the President's Call with President Lee of the Republic of Korea

President Obama and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak spoke this evening by telephone as part of their ongoing consultations on the full range of U.S.-ROK alliance issues. President Lee provided an update on the status of the investigation into the sinking of the ROK naval vessel Cheonan in which 46 Korean sailors lost their lives. He expressed appreciation on behalf of the Korean people for U.S. support in the Cheonan rescue and salvage operations, as well as for the participation of U.S. experts in the international inquiry. The two leaders emphasized the importance of obtaining a full accounting of the event and committed to follow the facts of the investigation wherever they lead. They also pledged their utmost efforts to ensure the security of the Republic of Korea, its armed forces, territory and its people. President Obama reaffirmed the strong and unwavering commitment of the United States to the defense and the well-being of its close friend and ally, the Republic of Korea.

President Obama and President Lee reiterated that North Korea must live up to its commitment to eliminate its nuclear-weapons program, comply with its international obligations under relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions, and put an end to belligerent behavior towards its neighbors. President Obama confirmed that Secretary Clinton would visit Seoul for consultations next week and that the defense and foreign ministers of the two countries would hold their first-ever "Two plus Two" meeting in July. Presidents Obama and Lee agreed to remain in close touch, and to meet at the time of the G-20 meeting in Canada in June.

Major Powers Agree on Iran Sanctions

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the major powers have agreed on a draft sanctions resolution against Iran's nuclear weapons program.

"We have reached agreement on a strong draft with the cooperation of both Russia and China," Clinton said at a U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing May 18.

"We have been working closely with our P5+1 partners for several weeks on the draft."

The draft resolution will be given to the full 15-member Security Council May 18, Clinton said. The P5+1 countries include the five permanent members of the Security Council — China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States — plus Germany.

Specific details of the sanctions resolution were not announced, but it is expected to carry broad economic penalties against Iranian officials and institutions responsible for the nuclear development program.

The United States and its partners in the talks with Iran have been considering a fourth round of political and economic sanctions through the Security Council after Iran did not comply with an October 2009 arrangement on its nuclear materials.

The Iranian regime announced instead on May 17 that it has agreed to a plan negotiated by Turkey and Brazil to ship 1,200 kilograms of low-enriched uranium to Turkey, where it would be stored. After one year, Iran would have the right to receive about 120.2 kilograms of uranium enriched to 20 percent from Russia and France.

But it was clear from the White House that the Tehran announcement was not convincing. "Given Iran's repeated failure to live up to its own commitments and the need to address fundamental issues related to Iran's nuclear program, the United States and international community continue to have serious concerns," White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said May 17.

"There are a number of unanswered questions regarding the announcement coming from Tehran," Clinton told the senators. "I think this announcement is as convincing an answer to the efforts undertaken in Tehran over the last few days as any we could provide."

In the original arrangement reached in Geneva in October 2009, Iranian officials agreed to ship about 1,200 kilograms of uranium to Russia, which represented about two-thirds of its total stockpile of nuclear fuel at the time. The nuclear material would be processed to 20 percent enrichment in Russia and then shipped to Paris where it could be turned into fuel rods for use in the Tehran medical research reactor. However, the Geneva agreement ultimately faltered under intense political pressure from within Iran.

"Although we acknowledge the sincere efforts of both Turkey and Brazil to find a solution regarding Iran's standoff with the international community over its nuclear program, the P5+1 ... are proceeding to rally the international community on behalf of a strong sanctions

resolution that will in our view send an unmistakable message about what is expected from Iran," Clinton said.

Clinton told the senators that she had spent the earlier part of the day talking by telephone with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to complete the resolution.

Clinton, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, went before the Senate committee to testify about the proposed arms reduction treaty (New START) between the United States and Russia that would reduce both nations' nuclear arsenals to 1,550 active warheads each, the lowest level since the 1950s.

U.S. Officials Call for New START Ratification

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington - Senior U.S. officials urged the U.S. Senate to approve a new arms control pact with Russia that will improve relations with the former Cold War foe and enhance national security and diplomatic credibility while not undercutting U.S. nuclear forces.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee began hearings May 18 on a proposed arms reduction treaty that would reduce U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals to their lowest levels since the 1950s, and advance President Obama's goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

"We will strengthen our national security more broadly, including by creating greater leverage to tackle a core national security challenge: nuclear proliferation," Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said.

Clinton, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Joint Chiefs Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen testified May 18 before the committee, which has begun the lengthy Senate process of analyzing and approving or disapproving the proposed New START Treaty.

The treaty, which would replace the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and the 2002 Moscow Treaty, was signed by President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev at Prague Castle in Prague April 8.

Committee Chairman John Kerry said formal submission of the treaty to the Senate begins the constitutional process known as advice and consent to ratification. Approval in the Senate requires the support of 67 of the 100 possible votes, which means the president will have to have considerable support from the Democratic majority in his own political party and some support from Republican senators. A similar process has to be conducted by the Russian parliament before the treaty can enter into force.

"The choice before us is between this treaty and no treaty governing our nuclear security relationship with Russia, between this treaty and no agreed verification mechanisms on Russia's strategic nuclear forces, between this treaty and no legal obligation for Russia to maintain its strategic nuclear forces below an agreed level," Clinton said.

The New START Treaty would reduce the total number of nuclear warheads that are held by the United States and Russia by a third. Each nation's active arsenal would be set at 1,550 warheads and 700 deployed nuclear delivery vehicles, which include ballistic missiles, submarine-launched missiles and strategic bombers.

The treaty gives the United States and Russia seven years to reduce forces and remains in force for 10 years from ratification. It contains detailed definitions and counting rules that will help the countries calculate the number of warheads that count under the treaty limits. The treaty does not prevent the United States from fielding a missile defense system.

Senator Richard Lugar, the senior Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee, said, "The president has declared the New START treaty to be a top legislative objective and has called for Senate approval this year. Failing to deliver these reviews related to the START treaty, in expedited fashion, would diminish perceptions of the priority of the treaty and complicate the Senate debate timetable."

Gates told the senators that the proposed treaty reduces the strategic nuclear forces of both nations in a way that strengthens the strategic stability of the relationship with Russia and protects the security of the American people and America's allies.

"America's nuclear arsenal remains a vital pillar of our national security, deterring potential adversaries and reassuring allies and partners," Gates testified. "As such, the first step of the yearlong Nuclear Posture Review was an extensive analysis which, among other things, determined how many nuclear delivery vehicles and deployed warheads were needed. This in turn provided the basis for our negotiations of START."

Gates said he has confidence, based on the extensive studies conducted by the Pentagon, that the United States will be able to maintain an effective nuclear deterrent while modernizing its current weapons to ensure that they are safe, secure and reliable, all within the limits of the new treaty.

"The U.S. strategic nuclear deterrent will continue to be based on the triad of delivery systems - intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles,

and nuclear-capable heavy bombers – within the boundaries negotiated in the New START Treaty,” Gates said.

Mullen told the Senate committee that the proposed treaty has the full support of the U.S. armed forces.

“The conclusion and implementation of the New START Treaty is the right thing for us to do,” Mullen said. “The [armed services] chiefs and I believe the New START Treaty achieves important and necessary balance between three critical aims.”

“It allows us to retain a strong and flexible American nuclear deterrent. It strengthens openness and transparency in our relationship with Russia. It also demonstrates our national commitment to reducing the worldwide risk of nuclear incidents resulting from the continuing proliferation of nuclear weapons,” Mullen said.

Along with the New START Treaty, Obama submitted a plan to spend \$80 billion over the next decade to maintain and improve the nation’s nuclear weapons complex, which was a concern among Republican senators who have said it is essential for their support for the treaty.

U.S. Fund Supports Renovation of Historic Mumbai YMCA

Restoration improves residents’ lives, provides livable space
By Carrie Loewenthal Massey
Special Correspondent

New York – The 100-year-old building housing the Mumbai Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in India can now be better enjoyed by future generations after a recently completed restoration project assisted in part by the United States.

With a \$30,000 grant from the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) in 2008, YMCA management implemented a number of improvements and structural upgrades that restore elements of the Student Branch building’s Neo-Classical and Neo-Palladian design and also enhance its livability for its male, young-adult residents.

One resident, Ashwin Balachandran, was among the boys living in the hostel as it underwent 19 months of restoration work.

“The change has been heartening. We have got so much more than we had asked. It is slightly overwhelming,” he told *The Indian Express*.

Changes to the historic building, which opened in April 1910, included the installation of a historically accurate

mezzanine floor and bell-shaped wall lamps, colorful wall paint that differs for each of the space’s three stories, and the restoration of an iron spiral staircase.

The Ambassadors Fund grant supported the full restoration and outfitting of the ground-floor public space for use as a multipurpose sports and activity room and exhibition and lecture area. It also contains a library and administrative office. The grant helped restore the original flooring after floor tiles added over the decades were removed, and repaired ceiling and floor cracks and damaged arches.

The YMCA Student Branch provides public space open to youth and underserved members of Mumbai’s urban population, as well as housing for college students with demonstrated financial need, the embassy reports. The structure occupies a corner of Mumbai’s historic district. YMCA secretary Paul George opted in 2007 to restore, rather than raze, the building, which was “literally in shambles,” according to *The Indian Express*.

George hopes the restoration will land the structure on Mumbai’s register of protected monuments, thereby protecting it from future destruction, he told *The Times of India*. To lead the renovations, George hired conservation architect Vikas Dilawari, who had to balance the goal of fortifying the building for a long future with maintaining the integrity of the original architecture. Both George and Dilawari are alumni of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs that seek to build skills, capacity and relations between the United States and other nations.

“It was a challenge to make sure that the present landscape is similar to the original one and create a historically sensitive structure,” Dilawari said in an interview with *The Indian Express*.

The project’s efforts paid off, as the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) honored the work with an Award of Merit in its 2009 Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Culture Heritage Conservation. The UNESCO selection panel commended the project’s “appropriately modest approach to preserve the building, which has maintained the spirit of place of this well-loved community institution.” The renovations succeeded in “uplifting the entire historic streetscape,” and gave the YMCA building “a new lease on life,” the panel said.

That type of preservation message was a key aspect of the Ambassadors Fund grant. Owners of other nearby historic buildings faced with a decision of restoring or razing their buildings would see that “sensitive modifications can provide a balance between the original Old World charm and modern-day needs, raising the value of the property and nurturing appreciation for this city’s rich heritage and architectural treasures,” the

embassy said.

The YMCA and Dilawari also used the project as an opportunity to train prospective conservation architects and tradesmen, thereby increasing India's capacity to apply this type of conservation work to other historical structures.

Upon completion of the renovations in January 2009, U.S. Consul General Paul Folmsbee re-dedicated the building, and the YMCA hosted Martin Luther King III, son of the late Martin Luther King Jr., the American civil rights leader of the 1950s and 1960s.

"YMCA is like a mini-India," George told the *Express*. "You have students from every community, caste, creed and background living here. It is very important that they realize the importance of celebrating these differences. Who better to teach this than Martin Luther King III, hence we decided to invite him and his delegation here."

King's visit marked the first of many invitations the YMCA plans to extend to cultural dignitaries, along with organizing exchange programs and public lecture series, now that it has the space for such events, reported the *Express*.

The YMCA is a social service organization with facilities all over the world. National YMCA movements determine the services best suited to their locales.

The Ambassadors Fund was created by the U.S. Congress in 2001 to provide grants for cultural heritage preservation projects across South and Central Asia and in countries worldwide.

Lebanese-American Rima Fakhri Wins Miss USA Pageant

Fakhri is the first Muslim and second Arab American to win the contest

By M. Scott Bortot
Staff Writer

Washington — The newest face of American beauty is that of a young Muslim woman born in Lebanon.

Rima Fakhri won the Miss USA Pageant on May 16 in Las Vegas, defeating 50 other contestants. The 24-year-old Miss Michigan's pageant triumph sparked an outpouring of pride from America's Arab-American and Muslim community.

Imad Hamad, Michigan regional director for the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), said Fakhri is an American success story.

"For Arab Americans, it [her victory] carries a special

meaning because for the past several years we have faced many challenges," Hamad told America.gov. "But this just shows how an immigrant, who came from Lebanon, can be an ambassador from America to the world at just 24 years old."

Hamad said his organization once financially supported Fakhri's pageant aspirations.

"I always felt she has something to offer and was sure she would follow her passion and her dreams," Hamad said. "I was right."

Michigan-based radio talk show host Laila Alhussini shared Hamad's joy. Alhussini's morning show received congratulatory phone calls from listeners for the new Miss USA from Muslim and non-Muslim Americans alike — many of whom said they hope to see her win the Miss Universe title, the next step in her pageant journey.

Alhussini said Fakhri's victory challenges the stereotypes held by many Americans of Arab and Muslim women.

"We need to show Americans what we as Muslim women can achieve not only in America, but around the world," Alhussini said, adding that most Americans assume Muslim and Arab women are conservative.

Alhussini also said Fakhri's triumph is a signal to Muslim-American and Arab-American women to become more involved in everyday life.

"We don't really appreciate and open up enough to American society," Alhussini said. "Her entering the Miss USA pageant and winning means we are changing and opening up."

Fakhri told pageant officials that her family celebrates both Muslim and Christian faiths at home. Raised in Queens, New York, Fakhri attended Catholic school and moved to Michigan with her family in 2003.

The University of Michigan graduate volunteered for the Dearborn, Michigan-based Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) according to an Arab American National Museum press release. While at ACCESS, she worked for the Arab American Resource Corps program. Fakhri guided clients in negotiating government assistance programs.

"Rima was so very helpful. Clients simply loved her," said Brigitte Fawaz-Anouti, director of the ACCESS Social Services Department — Main Office & Special Projects. "She was so sympathetic, especially with older clients, and exhibited such kindness, compassion and patience in delivering services. Rima was one of my best."

Fakih is the second Arab American to win the Miss USA contest; Julie Hayek won in 1983. The pageant started in California in 1952 as a swimsuit contest. As the winner of this year's competition, Fakih will represent the United States at this summer's Miss Universe pageant in Las Vegas.

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