

American

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Secretary Clinton to Visit Japan, China, South Korea

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton is leading a U.S. delegation on a three-nation East Asia diplomatic mission that will focus on regional security and economic talks and include the developing security situation on the Korean Peninsula.

The centerpiece of the trip will be the second joint meeting of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Beijing May 24–25. Clinton and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner will hold talks with the Chinese co-chairs, State Councilor Dai Bingguo and Vice Premier Wang Qishan, Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said at a State Department briefing May 19. The first dialogue was hosted by the United States July 27–28, 2009, in Washington. This is Clinton's fifth mission to Asia as secretary of state.

Campbell, who is the assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, said the recent announcement by South Korean officials that a North Korean submarine used a torpedo in a March 26 attack on the 1,200-ton Korean corvette Cheonan that killed 46 sailors will be featured prominently during portions of talks in Japan, China and South Korea.

"We will review the developing security situation on the Korean Peninsula," Campbell told news reporters. "We will discuss the ongoing troubles in Thailand and we will also review our common approaches to engagement of China."

The two-nation dialogue is expected to address a U.S. desire for China to move to a market-determined currency exchange rate, said David Loevinger, the Treasury Department's senior coordinator for China affairs. Talks will also include North Korea and its nuclear ambitions.

Clinton announced at a congressional hearing May 18 that Russia and China have joined with U.S. efforts to win a new round of sanctions against Iran in the U.N. Security Council.

The two-and-a-half days of talks in Beijing involve a group of economic, political and strategic players from across the Obama administration to engage in what is being called deep dialogue with Chinese officials on an array of issues, Campbell said. Clinton is also expected to meet with Chinese President Hu Jintao and Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi in Beijing.

Geithner is planning a meeting with Governor Zhou Xiaochuan of the People's Bank of China as well as meetings with Vice Premier Wang, Loevinger said. U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Benjamin Bernanke and U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk and others from the Cabinet and federal agencies will attend the dialogue meetings.

"Our relationship with China is one of the most important in the world, and President Obama is committed to making it more beneficial to the American people," Loevinger told reporters. "President Obama has underscored the very tight link between trade and U.S. jobs creation, and he has set a goal of doubling exports over the next five years to create 2 million additional American jobs."

"Combating barriers that prevent U.S. workers and companies from getting free and fair access to foreign markets and ensuring that large economies like China with large current-account surpluses depend more on their own domestic demand for growth are key components of our efforts to achieve this goal of doubling exports in five years," Loevinger added.

In addition to talks in Beijing, Clinton will visit Tokyo on May 21, Campbell said. The secretary has meetings planned during the one-day stop with Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada.

"We'll also be discussing security and defense-related issues, including developments on Okinawa," Campbell said. U.S. and Japanese officials are expected to discuss plans to move the Futenma U.S. Marine air station and its 2,000 personnel to a less-populous site elsewhere on Okinawa. The air station has been the subject of intense debate within Japan.

"We will be working closely with our Japanese friends to underscore the importance of our alliance," Campbell said.

While in China, Clinton will visit the 2010 Shanghai World Expo and attend a dinner in honor of the USA Pavilion sponsors and others who helped develop it.

"This is a signature initiative that she has been involved in to bring into life this wonderful exhibit which highlights American life. This is one of the largest expos of its kind in history," Campbell said.

In Seoul, Clinton will meet with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak and Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan. Those talks are expected to focus heavily on the sinking of the Cheonan as well as the stalled Six-Party Talks with North Korea. China, South Korea, Japan, Russia and the

United States have attempted to hold negotiations aimed at convincing the North Korean regime to end its nuclear development program and make the Korean Peninsula nuclear-free.

U.S. Condemns Sinking of South Korean Naval Vessel

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States strongly condemns the sinking of a South Korean navy corvette, the Cheonan, March 26 by a torpedo that killed 46 sailors, White House press secretary Robert Gibbs says.

“The report issued today by the team of international investigators reflects an objective and scientific review of the evidence. It points overwhelmingly to the conclusion that North Korea was responsible for this attack,” Gibbs said in a statement issued May 19 at the White House.

“This act of aggression is one more instance of North Korea’s unacceptable behavior and defiance of international law,” Gibbs said. “This attack constitutes a challenge to international peace and security and is a violation of the Armistice Agreement.” The Korean War ended in a truce in 1953; no peace treaty has been signed.

On March 26, an explosion ripped the 1,200-ton ship in half and it sank in about 132 feet (40 meters) of water near the countries’ disputed western sea border, according to news reports. Fifty-eight sailors were rescued, but 46 sailors died.

A panel of experts from South Korea, the United States, Britain, Sweden and Australia has been conducting an inquiry into the incident to determine the cause of the explosion. Fragments of a torpedo were found by South Korean fishermen on the ocean floor near the site, and investigators have been able to determine that there are traces of the explosive RDX on the ship’s hull. RDX is used in sea mines and torpedoes.

Gibbs said President Obama spoke with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak May 17 and made it clear that South Korea has U.S. support both in the effort to secure justice for the 46 sailors killed in this attack and in defense against further attacks.

“North Korea must understand that belligerence towards its neighbors and defiance of the international community are signs of weakness, not strength,” Gibbs said. “Such unacceptable behavior only deepens North Korea’s isolation.”

“It reinforces the resolve of its neighbors to intensify their cooperation to safeguard peace and stability in the region against all provocations,” Gibbs said.

The announcement of the investigation’s findings comes as Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton begins a three-nation diplomatic mission to Japan, China and South Korea May 20. Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell told reporters at a State Department briefing “the developing security situation on the Korean Peninsula” will be discussed with officials at all three stops.

“I can tell you that the United States has been deeply and actively involved in all aspects of the investigation,” Campbell said at the briefing with reporters May 19. “I will tell you that Secretary Clinton, one of the reasons and purposes for her trip will be to have the closest possible consultation with Japan, China and South Korea on the next phase.”

Obama’s First Cabinet-Level Trade Mission Visits China

U.S. commerce secretary lauds benefits of clean energy cooperation

By Andrew Malandrino
Staff Writer

Washington — “Working together, China and the United States can lead a second industrial revolution, where cleaner and more efficient technologies power the world’s factories, cars and homes,” U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke told a Shanghai audience in advance of Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton’s May 22–25 visit to China.

Leading the Obama administration’s first Cabinet-level trade mission, Locke and a delegation of representatives from 24 U.S. companies met with officials in Hong Kong before arriving in Shanghai May 18. The clean energy-focused trade mission now is in Beijing, where Locke will join Clinton and other members of President Obama’s Cabinet for the second U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue May 23–25. Locke and the mission will then travel to Jakarta, Indonesia, before returning to Washington.

The 24 companies participating in the trade mission, Locke said, represent the best U.S. resources in clean energy generation, energy efficiency and electricity storage, transmission and distribution.

Meeting with government and business leaders to create support for energy partnerships, Locke told members of the American Chamber of Commerce and the U.S.-China

Business Council in Shanghai, "A growing clean energy partnership between China and the United States could help put millions of both our peoples to work in high-skill, high-wage jobs."

SHARED CHALLENGES, SHARED OPPORTUNITIES

Locke described the energy issues facing the United States and China as "the defining challenge of our time." The United States and China, as the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases, have a responsibility to act, he said.

In 2009, the two countries created the U.S.-China Renewable Energy Partnership. Each country pledged \$15 million for joint research on energy solutions. Locke said, however, "To get clean energy to scale, we're going to have to mobilize and incentivize private sector innovation like never before."

The companies joining Locke on the trade mission "already possess cutting-edge technologies that can deliver immense benefits for the citizens of both the United States and China," Locke said. Private sector partnerships in clean energy will benefit U.S. and Chinese companies and their workers, he said. The partnerships are also good for citizens, providing access to clean, renewable power, Locke added.

To facilitate these partnerships, the United States and China "need to do everything we can to keep markets open and allow for the free flow of capital and ideas across our borders," Locke said. "This is an area where American companies operating in China have substantial concerns."

Locke mentioned a 2009 announcement by the Chinese government that could limit foreign companies from bidding on work in China. Restricting foreign direct investment and imports would "harm China's innovation environment," Locke said. "While the United States and China will not always agree on everything, our economies and our environments are closely linked, and we have to strive to solve our problems through dialogue and cooperation.

"As inhabitants of this planet, we will rise and fall together," he said.

Meeting with China's National Development and Reform Commission Chairman Zhang Ping in Beijing May 20, Locke discussed ways to build cooperative U.S.-China relationships that expand economic growth and clean energy development. The 24 business representatives joining Locke on the mission "are finding that there are promising opportunities for U.S.-China joint ventures in clean energy."

Locke's mission has not focused exclusively on energy issues. Prior to arriving in Shanghai May 18, he signed an agreement with the Hong Kong Commerce and Economic Development Bureau to support the marketing and promotion of U.S. wines. Worldwide, Hong Kong is the fastest-growing and fourth-largest market for U.S. wines.

U.S., Russia Hold Productive Internet, Technology Talks in Moscow

U.S. official says two nations "share a common digital future"

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Staff Writer

Washington — As leaders in the development of information and communication technology (ICT), Russia and the United States have a common interest in promoting its effective use worldwide, says Ambassador Philip Verveer, U.S. coordinator for international communications and information policy.

Recent high-level talks between the United States and Russia were an important step toward a better understanding of how each nation views the challenges of ICT and its further development, Verveer told America.gov.

Speaking in his State Department office shortly after he led a U.S. delegation to Moscow for May 11-14 meetings with ICT officials, including Russian Minister of Telecommunications and Mass Media Igor Shchegolev, Verveer said the growth of ICT and especially the Internet "gives us all a common future."

He also emphasized that the current round of talks was meant "to complement and support" the U.S.-Russian Bilateral Presidential Commission created by President Obama and President Dmitry Medvedev in July 2009.

"There is no question, we do share a common digital future with Russia," Verveer said. "This is one of the realities of the Internet. The convergence of telecommunications and computer technology and cellular [mobile] architecture is making broadband and the Internet much more available to people around the world than we ever imagined could be possible."

One area of potential cooperation is lending cybersecurity expertise to developing countries in the fight against hackers, Verveer said.

Both the United States and Russia "have a deep expertise in this area," he said. And "it seemed to us that there was a possibility for good cooperation" in working with developing nations on Internet protection.

Verveer said the Russians expressed excitement over President Medvedev's upcoming visit to the United States and his planned side trip to California's Silicon Valley – a world-renowned high-technology hub.

Medvedev has expressed a keen interest in developing a similar concentration near Moscow. He recently made ICT innovation a top priority of his administration, Verveer said.

The Russians are very concerned with ICT modernization and improvement, and the move to create an equivalent of Silicon Valley is a part of that effort, the U.S. official added. "President Medvedev is strongly behind the initiative," he said.

Verveer said another important topic during his discussions in Moscow was the 2012 International Telecommunication Union (ITU) conference, which is set to debate regulation of the Internet. In that context, he said, "we wanted to have a continuing dialogue with the Russians because their administration has been particularly energetic in pursuing this notion of broadband regulation by the ITU."

But the "U.S. perspective is that there ought to be one open Internet, that there ought not be a fragmentation or Balkanization of the Internet, and so our policy efforts are directed toward trying to preserve one open Internet as much as possible," he added.

The problem, Verveer explained, is that the Russian proposal "carries with it a distinct possibility of some sort of intergovernmental control over facets of the Internet and we think that is not a very good idea." The fear, he said, is that the "dynamism and innovation" underlying the Internet would "inevitably be slowed up if there were international control over Internet activities. And so we're very anxious to avoid that to the extent possible."

Rather than a set of restrictions and regulations, Verveer said, the continuing evolution of the Internet depends on a continuation of the process that has turned it into a large and successful cooperative venture.

While in Moscow, Verveer's delegation also attended the first Russian Internet Governance Forum. The May 13-14 gathering of ICT officials and experts from all over Europe as well as Russia featured panel discussions on topics such as bridging the digital divide, legal issues of Internet governance, privacy protection and managing the Internet infrastructure.

U.S. Concerned About Pakistan's Ban of Facebook, YouTube

United States "deeply concerned" about attempts to offend Muslims, others

By Louise Fenner
Staff Writer

Washington – The State Department says many of the images of the Prophet Muhammad added to the social networking website Facebook are "deeply offensive to Muslims and non-Muslims alike," but that there needs to be a "balance" between Pakistan's desire to protect its citizens from offensive speech and its responsibility to ensure freedom of information and expression.

Pakistan blocked access to Facebook May 19 and to the video site YouTube May 20 after one group of Facebook users asked people to draw and post images of the Prophet Muhammad on the site. Islam bans visual images of the prophet. A Pakistani court ordered the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority to command all Internet service providers in the country to block the sites because of what it called "growing sacrilegious content."

During the State Department daily briefing May 20, spokesman P.J. Crowley said the United States is "deeply concerned about any deliberate attempt to offend Muslims or members of any other religious groups. We do not condone offensive speech that can incite violence or hatred."

However, "we also believe that the best answer to offensive speech is dialogue and debate," Crowley added. "And, in fact, we see signs that that is exactly what is occurring in Pakistan."

"Governments have a responsibility to protect freedom of expression and the free flow of information," he said. "We respect any actions that need to be taken under Pakistani law to protect their citizens from offensive speech. At the same time, Pakistan has to make sure that in taking any particular action that you're not restricting speech to the millions and millions of people who are connected to the Internet and have a universal right to the free flow of information."

Crowley referred to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's January speech in support of Internet freedom, in which she linked the freedom to use the Internet without government obstruction to basic human rights such as freedom of religion, speech and assembly.

But "free expression has its limits," Clinton said. "We do not tolerate those who incite others to violence, such as the agents of al-Qaida who are, at this moment, using the Internet to promote the mass murder of innocent people

across the world. And hate speech that targets individuals on the basis of their race, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation is reprehensible. It is an unfortunate fact that these issues are both growing challenges that the international community must confront together."

Ultimately, the United States supports an "Internet where all of humanity has equal access to knowledge and ideas," the secretary said.

Crowley, responding to questions about Pakistan's shutdown of Facebook and YouTube, said, "The best antidote to intolerance is not banning or punishing offensive speech, but rather a combination of robust legal protections against discrimination and hate crimes and proactive government outreach to minority religious groups, and a vigorous defense of both freedom of religion and expression."

He said Pakistan has to try to find "that difficult balance." It is clear that the materials posted on the Facebook page "were offensive to Pakistanis and members of other Muslim-majority communities around the world. But at the same time, we do in fact support the universal principle of freedom of expression, free flow of information. And we will continue to promote Internet freedom, as the secretary outlined in her speech," he said.

Crowley noted that the Facebook page was "posted anonymously at the website of a private company. It is now a legal matter between Facebook and the government of Pakistan." According to some news reports, Facebook said it may consider making content that is considered objectionable by Pakistan inaccessible to users in that country.

Two Facebook pages have already been posted in opposition to the one that asked people to draw Muhammad; the ones in opposition have a higher total number of "followers" (supporters).

In 2005, there was a wave of protests after a Danish newspaper published cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. At the time, the State Department said the cartoons were "offensive," but it defended the freedom of expression of individuals and the media.

Top U.S. Scientists Urge Action on Climate Change

National Academy of Sciences: U.S. should set a price on carbon

By Karin Rives
Staff Writer

Washington — The National Academy of Sciences — the

United States' leading body of scientists — doesn't typically jump into policy debates. However, it has strayed from its normal role as a science adviser to the government and urged the United States to implement "prompt and sustained strategies" to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

One of its three reports, titled America's Climate Choices and published by the academy's National Research Council, also focused on the need to implement a "multiparty, public-private national framework" to help the country cope with inevitable climate change. Congress requested the reports in 2008, giving the scientists a broad mandate to analyze what's known about climate change, what causes it and how the nation should respond to it.

"Together these reports demonstrate that the state of climate change science is strong," Ralph Cicerone, the academy's president, said at a May 19 press conference. "They also underline the fact that the scientific community needs to continue to expand upon its understanding of why climate change is happening, and to focus on when and where the most severe impacts will occur — and what we can all do to respond."

An economy-wide pricing system for carbon should play a key part in a future policy to reduce emissions, the academy concluded, noting that such a mechanism could consist of a carbon tax or a so-called cap-and-trade system, or a combination of both. By putting a price on carbon dioxide emissions, the government would create economic incentives for industry and other polluters to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide they emit. Two bills pending in the U.S. Congress are proposing such plans.

Under the cap-and-trade system, the government issues pollution allowances that companies can sell for a profit on the open market if they reduce their emissions and no longer need them. Companies that don't reduce their emissions would buy the extra allowances and incur higher costs as a result.

Government revenues from carbon tax receipts or carbon allowance sales should be channeled back into energy research and development, energy-efficiency programs, climate change adaptation programs, or assistance for low-income households struggling with higher energy prices, the academy wrote. Concern over higher energy prices resulting from carbon pricing is one of the challenges Congress faces as it considers climate change legislation.

The chairman of one of the academy reports, Robert Fri, said a multipronged strategy that includes carbon pricing is critical if the United States is to meet needed greenhouse gas reduction goals. The academy proposed a domestic carbon emissions "budget" of 170 billion to 200

billion tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent greenhouse gases that could be emitted between 2012 and 2050. That would represent an emissions reduction of between 50 percent and 80 percent compared with 1990 levels, and corresponds with targets set by the Obama administration and proposed by members of Congress.

“Meeting that budget is a very challenging task,” Fri said. Even if all existing and emerging technologies to create renewable energy and capture and store carbon emissions were deployed to their fullest technical potential, he said, “it’s clear that we’re still going to need additional emission reduction efforts.”

The academy also proposed that the U.S. government do these things:

- Retrofit, replace or retire emission-intensive structures, such as coal-fired power stations.
- Address and remove barriers to full-scale testing and commercialization of new-generation nuclear power plants.
- Accelerate the build-out of low-carbon renewable energy sources such as nuclear and biomass plants, and wind, hydro, geothermal and solar power.
- Develop energy plants capable of capturing and storing carbon emissions.
- Push for the construction of compact, mixed-use urban neighborhoods that require less car travel.
- Develop new options for mass transportation and strengthen existing systems.

Also in the reports was the academy’s vision of how the United States should prepare and adjust to changes that will come with new and unavoidable climate patterns.

Noting that adaptation strategies will vary depending on local conditions and geography, the researchers proposed a national, federally run adaptation program that would coordinate local and regional efforts and link programs across the nation. The government should also play a major role in international adaptation activities and support global adaptation programs, the scientists wrote.

“The academy studies are up-to-date and well documented in their science, clear in their exposition, and compelling in their conclusions about policy,” said John Holdren, science adviser to President Obama and the White House. “I very much hope that every member of Congress and every other federal official with responsibilities in the energy-climate domain will read at least the concise summaries — 36 pages in all — at the beginning of each volume.”

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