

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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| | |
|--|---|
| Secretary Clinton Warns North Korea of Consequences of Attacking Ship..... | 1 |
| U.S. Announces Aggressive Approach to Reduce World Hunger | 1 |
| U.S. Treasury Secretary to Meet with European Finance Officials | 2 |
| U.S. Urges Iran to Release Three American Hikers | 3 |

Secretary Clinton Warns North Korea of Consequences of Attacking Ship

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States and its allies Japan, China and South Korea are discussing measures to take after international investigators confirmed that a North Korean submarine fired a torpedo that sunk a South Korean naval vessel, killing 46 sailors, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says.

“The evidence is overwhelming and condemning. The torpedo that sunk the Cheonan and took the lives of 46 South Korean sailors was fired by a North Korean submarine,” Clinton said at a May 21 press conference in Tokyo with Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada.

“We cannot allow this attack on South Korea to go unanswered by the international community. This will not be and cannot be business as usual,” Clinton told reporters.

Clinton warned the North Korean regime that there will be an international response, not just a regional one. For its part, the North Korean regime has denied involvement.

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

A panel of experts from South Korea, the United States, Britain, Sweden and Australia conducted an inquiry to determine the cause of the explosion. Fragments of a torpedo propeller with North Korean markings were found by South Korean fishermen near the site of the sinking on the ocean floor, and investigators found traces of the explosive RDX, which is used in sea mines and torpedoes.

President Obama pledged his support to South Korean President Lee Myung-bak in a telephone call following the attack, White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said in a statement May 19.

Clinton was on the first stop of a three-nation East Asia mission that takes her from Tokyo to Shanghai for the 2010 Shanghai World Expo and then to Beijing for two and a half days of talks at the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue. She concludes her trip in Seoul with intensive talks with South Korean officials over the incident with North Korea and what the next steps will be. South Korea is expected to take its formal complaint to

the U.N. Security Council.

While in Tokyo, Clinton discussed efforts to relocate the U.S. Marine Air Station at Futenma on Okinawa and its 2,000 Marine personnel. In a 2006 agreement, the facility was to be relocated to a less populous site on Okinawa, but a suitable site has not been agreed to. Efforts are under way to find a new location by May 31.

“We both seek an arrangement that is operationally viable and politically sustainable,” Clinton told reporters. “We have committed to redoubling our efforts to meet the deadline that has been announced by the Japanese government.”

Clinton, who also met with Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, emphasized during the joint press conference the critical and strategic importance of the U.S.-Japanese political and economic partnership. The United States has the largest economy in the world and Japan has the second largest. But the partnership is also the linchpin to Northeast Asian security.

“We agreed, at a time when tension is increasing in Northeast Asia ... that the Japan-U.S. security alliance is important and this is the year to deepen such ties,” Hatoyama told reporters after meeting with Clinton. “I want to explain frankly to the Japanese people that the presence of U.S. troops in Japan is indispensable to Japan’s security and to the peace and stability of the region in the current security environment.”

U.S. Announces Aggressive Approach to Reduce World Hunger

By Kathryn McConnell
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States plans to take an aggressive approach to reducing world hunger and malnutrition by investing in countries that have made plans to produce more food, create strong markets and spur private-sector investment in their agricultural sectors.

The initiative — called Feed the Future — will increase the incomes of at least 40 million people over 10 years and reduce chronic child malnourishment, said Rajiv Shah, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Shah outlined Feed the Future at a May 20 symposium in Washington sponsored by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Feed the Future involves the expertise of several U.S. agencies, including USAID, the departments of Agriculture and Treasury, the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Peace Corps, working in collaboration with a potential 20 “focus countries” in

Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In June 2009, President Obama pledged at least \$3.5 billion over three years for agricultural development and food security, which is ensuring that people have consistent access to nutritious food and sufficient income to purchase it. The initiative's full budget will have to be approved by Congress.

The Feed the Future initiative's potential countries in Africa are Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia; in Asia they are Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal and Tajikistan; and in Latin America, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua. These countries have low incomes, large rural populations and high rates of child malnutrition. Most have already involved their local communities and nongovernmental groups in improving farm productivity and increasing regional trade in food. The results achieved in these countries will provide the basis for deciding on investments by the United States beyond the announced three-year period.

By the end of 2010, the United States expects to deliver Feed the Future resources to 15 of the 20 potential focus countries. The investments will be aligned with the countries' priorities and with private-sector investments in such areas as grain storage and market information systems, Shah said. African participants in Feed the Future are courting U.S. investments to increase regional agricultural trade.

Shah said several countries have already exhibited leadership in food and investment strategies. He noted that since 2006, Rwanda has raised food production as a result of a nearly 50 percent increase in government investment in its own agricultural sector.

Some countries have created partnerships with large-scale international food buyers to create durable demand and supply systems. For example, the world's largest retailer, Wal-Mart, works with farmers in Central America to help them improve their post-harvest food handling.

The strategy announced by the administration places a priority on women farmers, who grow most of the food in developing countries. "When women control gains and income, they're far more likely to spend those gains improving their families' access to health, education and nutrition," Shah said.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack noted that the administration plans to expand credit, extension services and research fellowships for women. Feed the Future will also emphasize increased research into farm techniques and biotechnology. Research coordinated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and USAID will involve U.S.

and international universities and the private sector.

Vilsack said Feed the Future also will devote considerable resources to school feeding programs, which often are children's main source of nutritious meals. "It's about building healthy individuals and healthy countries. In order for that to happen you need well-educated people," he said.

He noted that volunteerism also will play a role. Programs like Farmer-to-Farmer, which is administered through nongovernmental groups, link volunteer U.S. farmers and agribusiness experts with counterparts in developing countries to share their skills.

U.S. Treasury Secretary to Meet with European Finance Officials

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — U.S. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, after visiting Beijing for economic talks with the Chinese, will head to Europe to confer with finance and banking officials in Britain and Germany on efforts to restore confidence in the interconnected global financial system.

Geithner will "meet with European officials to discuss the economic situation in the region and the measures being taken to restore global confidence and financial stability and to promote global recovery," the Treasury Department said May 20. Geithner meets with Chinese officials May 24-25 at the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and a U.S. delegation of some 200 officials that includes Federal Reserve Chairman Benjamin Bernanke also are part of the Dialogue.

The announcement comes after the U.S. Senate completed work on a sweeping financial reform bill aimed at preventing risky behavior by those involved in the banking system and financial markets, and also preventing the regulatory missteps that contributed to the deepest economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The Senate voted 59-39 May 20 for legislation designed to reshape U.S. financial regulation and create a new consumer-protection agency to prevent abuses in mortgage, automobile and credit card lending.

President Obama said after the Senate vote that "the recession we're emerging from was primarily caused by a lack of responsibility and accountability from Wall Street to Washington. It's part of the reason our economy nearly collapsed."

Obama said the measure will protect consumers, protect the economy and hold Wall Street accountable. Obama pledged to other world leaders in the Group of 20 major

economies at 2009 summits in London and Pittsburgh that the United States would do its part to implement financial regulatory reforms to prevent the excesses that contributed to the global recession.

One of the chief initiatives to emerge from the two economic summits was a call for greater financial reforms and enhanced regulations.

Geithner said the measure passed by the Senate would improve the competitiveness of U.S. financial markets and strengthen the safety and soundness of the financial system. The Senate bill will now have to be reconciled with a financial reform measure passed previously by the House of Representatives before becoming law.

EUROPEAN MEETINGS

After meetings in Beijing, Geithner will travel to London for a meeting May 26 with British Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, who has just taken office in the government of new Prime Minister David Cameron. He will travel to Frankfurt, Germany, for an evening meeting with Jean-Claude Trichet, the head of the European Central Bank, the Treasury Department announcement said.

On May 27, Geithner will meet with German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble in Berlin before returning to Washington.

European officials have been working to resolve a debt crisis that began in Greece and has created turmoil in markets and banks across Europe. Geithner told interviewers that he wanted Europe to stay with plans for restoring economic stability to the region. "Absolutely, Europe has the capacity to manage through this. We just want to see them follow through," he said May 19.

Geithner said a 750 billion euro loan fund for struggling governments from the European Union and the International Monetary Fund was essential to prevent the debt crisis from spreading.

On May 9, the Federal Reserve announced that it would open currency swap lines with the European Central Bank to provide funds to help shore up European money markets and banks. This was a measure taken during the height of the recession to help maintain funds in the global banking system. The Fed was joined by the Bank of Canada, the Bank of England, the European Central Bank, the Bank of Japan, and the Swiss National Bank in re-establishing the temporary U.S. dollar-swap arrangement.

U.S. Urges Iran to Release Three American Hikers

State Department pleased mothers were able to visit their children

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States is pleased that the mothers of three American hikers detained by Iranian authorities were able to visit their children in Tehran this week, but the visit doesn't change the U.S. position that the three are being held unjustly.

"We were obviously pleased to see pictures of the mothers of the three hikers as they visited their children for the first time since they were detained in Iran almost 10 months ago," P.J. Crowley, assistant secretary of state for public affairs, said at a State Department briefing May 20. But he added: "It is time for Iran to do the right thing by releasing these three young Americans and allowing them to go home and be reunited with their families."

He repeated Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's April 23 statement that said the three Americans were "innocent tourists" in Iraq's Kurdistan region when they were apprehended and detained by Iran. The three have been "unjustly held for almost nine months without formal charge or access to legal representation," Crowley said. Sarah Shourd, Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal have denied Iran's allegations that they were spying when they inadvertently crossed the unmarked border into Iran in July 2009.

Last week, Iran granted visas to their mothers for a widely televised visit held May 20 in a hotel in that country's capital.

When asked about any agreement with the Iranian government for the release of the three hikers, Crowley said: "We're not contemplating any kind of prisoner swap." And in a May 20 interview with the MSNBC television network, Crowley explained that although Iranian authorities have raised questions about Iranian citizens in U.S. jails, the United States does not see "an equivalence between those who have been tried and convicted of arms smuggling, for example, and these three hikers." He added that the United States would be happy to facilitate family meetings for Iranian citizens in U.S. custody at Iran's request.

The United States, which does not have diplomatic relations with Iran, has been working via the Swiss government for the release of the American hikers. "We have pressed repeatedly for Iran to release these three young people on humanitarian grounds," Crowley told MSNBC. "They are not spies; they are just young Americans, and they should be released."

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