

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama: Weapons of Mass Destruction Are Biggest Threat to U.S.

National Security Strategy report precedes end of NPT Review
By Jonathan F Schaffer
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama's just-released National Security Strategy says the American people "face no greater threat or more urgent danger than a terrorist attack with a nuclear weapon. And international peace and security is threatened by proliferation that could lead to a nuclear exchange."

The strategy, issued May 27, comes just a day before the expected conclusion of the month-long Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in New York, where representatives from nearly 190 countries have been meeting to strengthen the treaty across all three of its pillars: disarmament, nonproliferation, and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The core principles of the NPT, Obama has said, are for countries with nuclear weapons to reduce them, countries that don't have them to forgo them, and everyone has the right to peaceful nuclear energy. However, North Korea and Iran have consistently flouted international rules and U.N. Security Council resolutions to try to bring these countries into conformity with the goals of the NPT.

"We are reducing our nuclear arsenal and reliance on nuclear weapons," the National Security Strategy says. "We are strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as the foundation of nonproliferation, while working through the NPT to hold nations like Iran and North Korea accountable for their failure to meet international obligations."

The strategy is the first prepared by President Obama under a 1986 law that requires the president to outline annually to Congress the administration's national security strategy.

It says the United States will work toward a denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

"Both nations face a clear choice," it says. "If North Korea eliminates its nuclear weapons program, and Iran meets its international obligations on its nuclear program, they will be able to proceed on a path to greater political and economic integration with the international community. If they ignore their international obligations, we will pursue multiple means to increase their isolation and bring them into compliance with international nonproliferation norms."

On May 25, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton described Iran's plan to swap 1,200 kilograms of low-enriched uranium for 120 kilograms of uranium enriched to 20 percent for fuel rods in a medical reactor as a "transparent ploy" to avoid U.N. Security Council sanctions.

"We have made clear to Iran that if it chooses to develop a nuclear weapon, that will kick off an arms race in the Middle East that will challenge the foundation of the NPT," State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said May 24. "Iran and many other countries have the right to develop civilian nuclear energy, but with that right comes responsibilities."

To strengthen the NPT, the report says, the United States also will seek more resources and authority for inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency. It says the United States will work with others to develop a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation.

"As members of the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership have agreed, one important element of an enhanced framework could be cradle-to-grave nuclear fuel arrangement," it says.

For its part, the report says, the United States is reducing the role of nuclear weapons in its national security approach, extending an assurance not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against nonnuclear states that are in compliance with the NPT. It will also pursue ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and seek a new treaty that ends the production of fissile materials intended for use in nuclear weapons.

Secretary Clinton: Diplomacy, Development Critical to National Security

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says diplomacy and economic development are integral parts of President Obama's security strategy and have equal status with military force in protecting the American people.

The White House released the president's National Security Strategy May 27. It relies heavily on diplomacy and engagement, economic development and other methods of influence, along with U.S. military capabilities with global reach and unsurpassed resources.

Every president since Harry Truman has developed a national security strategy, and while they tend to build on the work of previous administrations, each president also seeks to carve out his mark on U.S. foreign policy and global relations while shaping an international agenda

that reflects his goals.

“This is a comprehensive National Security Strategy that integrates our strength here at home, our commitment to homeland security, our national defense and our foreign policy,” Clinton said May 27 at the Brookings Institution, a Washington-based policy research center.

“In a nutshell, this strategy is about strengthening and applying American leadership to advance our national interests and to solve shared problems,” she said.

Clinton said the approach by Obama, who assumed office 16 months ago, is to build on the diverse sources of American power at home and shape the global system with all of its flaws so that it becomes conducive to meeting overriding U.S. objectives – security, prosperity, the explanation and spread of American values, and an international order that is just and sustainable.

“We do this against the backdrop of a changed and always changing global landscape, and a difficult inheritance – two wars, a struggling economy, reduced credibility abroad, international institutions buckling under the weight of systemic changes and so much more,” Clinton said.

While preserving U.S. military preeminence, the Obama administration also emphasizes diplomatic engagement and multilateral coalition-building, she said.

General James Jones, the president’s national security adviser, told reporters at the Washington Foreign Press Center May 27 that after 16 months, one of the things the president and his administration have learned is that they must deal with the world as it is.

“This is a time of sweeping change. Two decades since the end of the Cold War, the free flow of information, people and trade continues to accelerate at an unprecedented pace,” Jones said. “Events far beyond our nation’s shores now impact our safety, our security and prosperity.”

Jones said the strategic approach is based on several elements: rebuilding the nation and recognizing that national security begins at home, comprehensive engagement and recognizing that no one nation can meet global challenges alone, promoting international order, and strengthening and integrating national capabilities.

Senator John Kerry, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Obama’s strategy restores a reality-based approach to meet U.S. security imperatives.

“The president recognizes we can’t achieve the world we want if we don’t recognize the world as it is today, and that combination of idealism and realism is the

foundation of his strategy,” Kerry said.

Conflict-Sensitive Approach to Food Security Is Needed

Conflict prevention expert addresses food symposium

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington – The relationship between conflict and hunger needs to be addressed in any effort to enhance global food security, according to Raymond Gilpin of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

Food insecurity and chronic hunger affect one-sixth of the earth’s population, and part of the equation for resolving conflict and promoting peace is eliminating hunger and helping people achieve food security. This is why, according to Gilpin, there needs to be a conflict-sensitive approach to enhancing food security.

Gilpin, who directs the Sustainable Economies Centers of Innovation at the U.S. Institute of Peace, made that point May 20 in an address to the Symposium on Global Agriculture and Food Security in Washington. He leads the institute’s work in analyzing complex economic relationships during all stages of conflict, including prevention, mediation, resolution and post-conflict. Gilpin designs capacity-building solutions for conflict environments.

Gilpin said a significant number of people who face hunger live in conflict-affected areas. “Most of them live in fear of their lives, in uncertain environments and without clear hope for a better tomorrow for themselves and the generations that would follow.”

According to the 2009 Global Hunger Index, he said, the most affected countries are primarily those that have been adversely affected by conflict: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone and East Timor.

Gilpin said food security is not always an issue of food availability, but often one of accessibility.

“When violent conflict afflicts a community or a region ... it destroys infrastructure and weakens institutions. So the very conduits necessary to move food from storage on the farms to the people who need it the most are undermined. So no matter how much attention you give to humanitarian issues, how many food drops you make, if we don’t have a strategy that focuses on the institutional and infrastructural peculiarities in conflict-afflicted countries, you are going to make very little impact.”

Secondly, he said, asset depletion during conflict has a major impact on food affordability.

"When conflict affects a community, people move and they either are separated from their assets or have to liquidate those assets to facilitate movement to ensure survival. Those are going to be the most vulnerable people when it comes to affording food in the markets."

Displacement and the politicization of food aid are also issues, he told his audience.

"Groups who usually have a monopoly of force, not just on livelihoods but also with regard to the distribution of goods and services," play a determining role in food distribution.

Finally, he said, food security strategy should also address the issue of market fragmentation. Conflict-affected countries suffer from fragmented markets, and, he said, "those markets influence who gets what and how much they pay."

Gilpin said "a lot needs to be done differently" on food security, both domestically and internationally.

"Domestically, tariff and non-tariff issues need to be addressed, but with full cognizance of the importance of ... income support and safety nets." Also, realistic levels of assistance are necessary along with support to enhance trade, he added.

Production incentives for farmers that help them to produce both for consumption and markets are also needed, he told his audience.

Internationally, he said, a "coordinated regional rapid response initiative" is needed. "Most humanitarian aid is bought on the spot markets. That is unacceptable and exorbitantly high priced. We need mechanisms" that would include stockpiles, resources, funding and logistics operations. "We need to refocus agricultural technology and expand market access," he told his audience.

In the end, he said, assuring adequate supplies of food for markets is tied to the most important production incentive for a farmer: the ability to sell crops for a reasonable return.

Democracy Is ... Stories of Survival and Hope

Western Hemisphere video contest finalists tell heart-touching stories

By Jane A. Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — Survival and hope are messages that run through this year's Democracy Video Challenge finalists from the Western Hemisphere.

The U.S. State Department-sponsored contest, now in its

second year, challenges videographers the world over to describe what "Democracy Is..." in three minutes or less. This year's contest attracted more than 1,600 submissions from people representing 111 countries. Eighteen finalists have been chosen from six different regions. The three finalists representing the Western Hemisphere are Franklin Pham, Juan Pablo Patiño Arévalo and Nicole Dalesio.

"Never give up. Never surrender," is the message in "Democracy Is Only the Beginning" by Franklin Pham, who was born in Vietnam, immigrated to France, and now lives in the San Francisco Bay area of California. His film tells the story of escape from torture and death and subsequent encounters with other victims of hate who were treated like "puppet rabbits."

"Never live under someone else's expectations," Pham says in the film. "We (the survivors) are all across the globe. Because in our hearts we all know democracy is only a beginning."

Pham said his filmmaking team participated in the Democracy Video Challenge "because we are fully aware that a tremendous amount of people on our planet are not even allowed to question the very purpose of a democracy. We wanted to be part of this unstoppable and ever increasing online global dialogue on social equity."

The story of a 7-year old "war child" is the focus of "Democracy Is ... the Right of Life" by Juan Pablo Patiño Arévalo of Colombia. Juan Pablo has completed a number of works in defense of human rights. His documentary "Osos Abandonados / Lost Innocence" (2009), for example, talks about children who are recruited or kidnapped by armed groups to be part of guerilla movements. For that film he was nominated for the India Catalina Award (2010) in the category of Best Documentary by New Director.

The universal responsibility to nurture and shape democracy is the theme of "Democracy Is a Child" by Nicole Dalesio. A mother and a grade school teacher working in California, Dalesio compares democracy to a child that is a fragile, vulnerable yet precious gift.

"The best way to promote democracy, world peace and the fulfillment of humankind's potential," according to Dalesio, "is to protect, nurture and invest in our youth. They are the world's most precious resource and our hope for the future."

The 18 finalists were selected by an independent, high-level jury chaired by renowned Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, who is president of the Institute for Liberty & Democracy. Participating in the jury were the six 2009 winners as well as executives from the film and

recording industries, film school administrators and leaders of partner organizations

From now until June 15, the public is invited to select the winners by going to the Democracy Video Challenge's page on YouTube, a contest partner, to view and vote for its favorites. Public votes will determine the contest's winners, and anyone may vote on as many films as desired, once per day. The six winners, one each from Africa, East Asia, Europe, the Middle East/North Africa, South Asia and the Western Hemisphere, will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, New York and Los Angeles in September.

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