

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Open Skies Treaty Fulfills Arms Control Needs

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — It may seem unusual to describe formalized treaties among nations as vital instruments in a toolbox. But in the somewhat arcane arena of arms control and nonproliferation, where the nuanced phrase and carefully chosen technical term is critical, the toolbox analogy is significant.

During three days of talks in Vienna, senior negotiators from 34 nations that stretch from Vancouver in the west to Vladivostok in the east met to assess implementation of the 10-year-old Open Skies Treaty — a step that is taken every five years. The treaty permits nations to conduct unarmed aerial observation flights over the territories of the treaty's members, with notification, as a practical means of verifying compliance with arms control and nonproliferation agreements.

Verification of treaty compliance is among the toughest challenges facing nations after a treaty enters into force. The Open Skies Treaty was designed to enhance understanding and confidence by giving all participants, regardless of their size, a direct role in gathering and sharing information.

Openness in matters of national security does not come easily, especially in a world where weapons of mass destruction are a factor and proliferation a constant threat.

Assistant Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller said June 9, at the close of the second review conference of the Open Skies Treaty, that it has become one of the most successful and valuable efforts to promote arms control openness. The United States served as chair of the review conference that was held June 7-9.

Gottemoeller told delegates, "The United States believes that it is essential for the Open Skies Treaty to remain a vital instrument in our Euro-Atlantic conventional arms control toolbox."

Gottemoeller is the State Department's assistant secretary for verification, compliance and implementation, and she and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Celeste Wallander served as co-chairwomen of the Open Skies review conference.

The consensus among members of the treaty coming out of the conference is for robust implementation, and the United States said it wants to consult with others in charting a new course for the treaty.

"The results of continued observation flights will contribute toward our security and stability as a group of nations," Gottemoeller told delegates.

The timing of the treaty's review conference was not lost on delegates, as it relates directly to events occurring in Europe, but also in the Middle East and in Northeast Asia, where the spread of nuclear weapons technology has become a central security issue.

Wallander told delegates in earlier remarks that the 34-nation treaty group is trying to evaluate the effectiveness of the treaty and support European security in an evolving political, economic and military environment.

"This is reflected in the reset in U.S.-Russian relations, the New START [arms reduction] Treaty [between the United States and Russia], discussions about a new NATO Strategic Concept, and our collective efforts to respond to a new global security environment that focuses largely on transnational threats rather than conflict among states," Wallander said.

Issues that will form the focus of further study include:

- Moving away from old film cameras to new digital sensors in all treaty categories.
- Updating the Open Skies fleet of aircraft used in aerial observation.
- Developing options for more shared observation flights by all members.
- Expanding membership of the treaty within the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.
- Determining if the imagery and other sensor data collected serve evolving security needs.

Gottemoeller told the delegates that the United States wants to work with treaty members on a five-year transition plan for the next review conference.

Wallander said the Open Skies Treaty faces two significant issues that have to be addressed now and in the next few years: an austere fiscal environment and the emerging digital era. The challenges intersect, she said.

All nations are facing more austere fiscal environments, and one means for sharing costs and reducing operating costs is through an international pool of aircraft and sensors, she said. The second challenge involves modernizing to an era that no longer relies on photographs that have to be developed in dark rooms, instead using imagery that can be taken by digital cameras and transmitted around the world in seconds.

“Apart from the up-front investment with upgrading to digital sensors, making that change will also require us to think through new implementation mechanisms and the costs associated with them,” Wallander said.

Expanding U.S. Economic Opportunities with China

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — U.S. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner told Congress that the economic strengths of the United States and China are complementary and each nation benefits from the growth of the other.

At a Senate Finance Committee hearing June 10, Geithner said the United States wants China to provide a level playing field for American products and investments by American companies. The Obama administration is also looking for China to change its growth strategy, striking a new balance that relies less on exports to foreign markets and more on domestic consumption.

Geithner told the senators that he has seen some progress by the Chinese government, but there are still many challenges.

For the United States, President Obama has pledged to rebalance the U.S. economy away from one characterized by overwhelming consumer demand to one that relies on greater savings and exports over the next five years. According to the U.S. Commerce Department’s trade report, the U.S. trade deficit with China rose 14 percent in April to \$19.3 billion, compared with \$16.9 billion in March.

The Senate Finance Committee, which has oversight responsibility for the U.S. economy and the Treasury Department, is evaluating U.S.-China economic relations, and will determine if legislation is necessary to improve fairness in the relationship.

Since the global financial crisis that began in December 2007, regarded as the steepest economic decline since the Great Depression of the 1930s, ended about the middle of last year, U.S. exports to China have rebounded more rapidly than overall U.S. exports, and are now running 20 percent above their pre-crisis levels. China is the third largest destination for U.S. merchandise exports, up from 11th place in 10 years, Geithner said.

“In the first quarter of 2010, U.S. goods exports to China rose almost 50 percent compared to the same period the year before, while U.S. exports to the rest of the world have risen by less than 20 percent,” he testified. There has been double-digit growth in several export sectors like

high-end manufactured goods, chemical products and agricultural goods like soybeans, he added.

As China is fast becoming the world’s second-largest economy and potentially could become the largest foreign market for U.S. exports of goods and services, it is consuming more. As a consequence, China’s overall trade surplus has fallen sharply, by approximately half as a share of its economy, Geithner told senators.

Coupled with that is the specter of inflation. China’s prices in May were 3.1 percent higher than a year earlier. The inflation rate in April was 2.8 percent, the government said in an economic report.

“China has to be a key part of any strategy to increase U.S. exports and jobs. Our strategy to improve the balance of benefits for Americans in this relationship focuses on change in three important areas: trade and investment policies, including China’s policies to favor domestic producers and domestic technology; economic reforms to reduce China’s reliance on exports and encourage more import growth; and exchange rate reform,” Geithner told senators.

Geithner said distortions caused by China’s exchange rate spread far beyond China’s borders, and they are an impediment to global economic rebalancing being sought by the United States and also the Group of 20 major economies, including China. Economists argue that an undervalued Chinese currency makes Chinese-made products cheaper and U.S. exports more costly in China, which can create an unfair trade advantage.

“Reform of China’s exchange rate is critically important to the United States and to the global economy,” Geithner testified. “And it is in China’s own interest to allow the exchange rate to reflect market forces.”

“A stronger renminbi [also known as the yuan] would benefit China because it would boost the purchasing power of households and encourage firms to shift to production for domestic demand rather than for export,” Geithner said.

Iraq Takes Control of Web-Based Library for Its Scientists

U.S. agencies support low-cost access to online educational materials

By Cheryl Pellerin
Science Writer

Washington — The Iraqi government has assumed management of a four-year-old online library created by U.S. agencies and institutions to give scientists in that

nation critically needed access to the latest research in chemistry, engineering, mathematics and physics.

The Iraq Virtual Science Library (IVSL) was developed in 2006 through sponsorship by the U.S. departments of State and Defense. It was managed by the U.S. National Academies and overseen by the U.S. Civilian Research and Development Foundation (CRDF).

"In the four years since IVSL was implemented, the library has had more than 7,000 registrants and now serves 90 percent of the Iraqi university population and nine government ministries," CRDF President Cathy Campbell said at a June 7 ceremony in Washington to transfer control of the project to the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

At the ceremony, Abdul Hadi Al-Khalili, cultural attaché from the Embassy of Iraq, read a message from Abd Thiab Al-Ajeeli, Iraqi minister of higher education and scientific research.

"Our priority is the uplift of higher education in Iraq," Al-Ajeeli wrote, "which includes supporting researchers, faculty and indeed all Iraqi science community at large in trying to provide them with means of access to all science all over the world."

He thanked the U.S. organizations involved in the development and support of the Web-based portal and promised to make the IVSL available to everyone in Iraq in the fields of science and technology.

BUILDING THE LIBRARY

The idea was sparked by the experiences of Alex Dehgan, an ecologist working in Iraq as a science and technology policy fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) to rebuild the Museum of Natural History.

The yearlong AAAS fellowships help establish critical links between federal decisionmakers and scientific professionals to support public policy.

Working with Iraqi scientists, Dehgan saw their tremendous need for access to updated scientific literature. He and two others — Susan Cumberledge, now deceased but at the time a biochemistry professor at the University of Massachusetts and an AAAS fellow, and Bill McCluskey, then the director of the Defense Department's International Technology Policy Office, began to enlist the help of other AAAS fellows to develop the concept of an online library.

"Our interests are greater by supporting the rebuilding of Iraq, which is a process that continues, by supporting the

rebuilding of its scientific infrastructure," Dehgan said June 7. "And not just in Iraq — it supports us to do this everywhere in the world, where we give people the capacity to solve their own problems. That's the greatest degree of respect."

University of Maryland scientist D.J. Patil, an AAAS fellow in the Defense Department's Defense Threat Reduction Agency, was enlisted to lead the digital library's design, implementation and funding.

Participating publishers include Springer Publishing, Thomson Reuters, IEEE Publishing, American Chemical Society, American Society of Mechanical Engineers, American Institute of Physics, American Mathematical Society, American Society of Civil Engineering, Association for Computing Machinery, Elsevier Publishing, the U.S. JSTOR online system for archiving academic journals, and others.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERS

Several public-private partnerships support the library. U.S. government partners include the departments of Defense, State, Agriculture and Energy along with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Other partners include the Iraq International Center for Science and Industry, private scientific publishers such as Springer Publishing, Sun Microsystems, the University of Maryland, Cornell University, Yale University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the National Academy of Sciences.

California-based online learning company Vitalect is also a contributor, as is the Danish database company SemperTool.

The partners have provided computer software, information technology training and some computer and communications hardware.

"The model that has been created is also applicable to other countries, and CRDF has received a number of inquiries from several countries about how this same model can be applied to their situation," CRDF Senior Vice President Eric Novotny said.

"We're happy to be responding to that," he said, "and there will be a derivative legacy as other countries begin to recognize the benefits of having virtually the entire corpus of science available to their research and teaching communities."

CRDF will continue to work with the government of Iraq, helping expand the IVSL to other areas and add databases

and other capabilities to give the Iraqis a true research portal for basic and applied research.

Americans Devoted to Arab Causes Receive Recognition

Academic, journalist and culture guardians honored at convention luncheon

By M. Scott Bortot
Staff Writer

Washington — Americans dedicated to protecting Arab rights and preserving Arab culture received awards at the closing luncheon of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) 30th anniversary national convention.

Hundreds attended the event that focused on Palestinian issues. Clovis Maksoud, former Arab League ambassador to the United Nations and its chief representative in the United States, was the luncheon's keynote speaker. Maksoud spoke passionately about ways to achieve a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis.

Washington-area attorney Fadi Kiblawi presented the Rachel Corrie Award, named in honor of the American peace activist killed by an Israeli bulldozer in Gaza in 2003.

"As we congregate here to recognize Rachel Corrie's spirit, her dedication to human rights and how she has inspired so many of us, so many people here and so many people across the world, particularly the two people who we are here to recognize today ... her spirit is most embodied in Ramzi Kysia and Jennifer Loewenstein," Kiblawi said.

Kysia helped establish Al-Muajaha newspaper in Baghdad in 2003. His efforts at improving the lives of Iraqis earned him the Peacemakers Award from the Georgetown University Program on Justice and Peace in 2004. In the Palestinian Territories, he worked on solidarity projects with Christian Peacemaker Teams, Interfaith Peace-Builders and Free Gaza Movement.

In his acceptance speech, Kysia spoke about the challenges peace activists face everywhere.

"When has progress ever been made, when has moving to a just world been anything less than putting all of your heart and soul on the line for what you know is right?" Kysia said.

Loewenstein is an associate professor of Middle East studies and program director for the Havens Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is also a freelance

journalist, human rights activist and a part-time volunteer for Al Mezan Center for Human Rights in Gaza. She founded or co-founded campus and community groups that educate people about U.S. and Israeli policies in the Middle East.

She talked about the roots of her activism.

"What I was taught as a child ... is that when that authority, your state, your mayor, from the ground up, when the states fail in their obligations to protect and defend the human rights of all people in whatever region, it is up to the people to step in and do it themselves," Loewenstein said.

Riam Siam received posthumously the Rose Nader Award from Nader's daughter, Claire Nader. Rose Nader, who died in 2006, was a pioneering Arab-American activist and the mother of former U.S. presidential candidate and consumer advocate Ralph Nader.

Siam, who succumbed to cancer in 2009, helped victims of discrimination around the country through her advocacy work. She organized a food and clothing drive for the people of Lebanon during the 2006 war and hosted a children's dance troupe from a Palestinian refugee camp. Siam also devoted time to speaking at community forums to educate citizens on civil rights issues.

Nader Siam, her brother, accepted the award on behalf of his family.

"The reason she wanted to be an attorney was because she wanted to help people. She wanted to be a voice for people that had no voice," Siam said. "And that is entirely, exactly what she did."

Hanan and Farah Munayyer received the Hala Salaam Maksoud Award, named in honor of the late ADC president. Maksoud's sister, Haniya Othman, presented the award.

The Munayyers are Palestinian-American scientists who immigrated to America in 1970. They own one of the largest and most pristine collections of traditional Palestinian costumes, arts and crafts. In 1992, they co-founded the Palestinian Heritage Foundation to promote awareness and understanding of Arab and Palestinian culture.

Farah Munayyer recalled fondly the relationship that he and his wife, Hanan, enjoyed with Maksoud. Maksoud's collection of traditional Arab clothes is part of the Palestinian Heritage Foundation's collection.

"Wherever we go, Hala's name is there, next to the dresses," Farah Munayyer said. "The last time we

displayed her dresses was at the Kennedy Center [in Washington], at the historic Arabesque Festival for three weeks.”

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