

American

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U.N. Security Council Condemns Attack on South Korean Navy Vessel

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton welcomed the U.N. Security Council's unanimous condemnation of the attack on the South Korean navy vessel Cheonan, saying it sends the message that attacks on the Republic of Korea "are unacceptable," and that North Korea must uphold the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement.

Clinton issued a statement July 9 after the Security Council voted to approve a Presidential Statement on the March 26 incident that killed 46 South Korean sailors.

The U.N. statement "sends a clear message that such irresponsible and provocative behavior is a threat to peace and security in the region and will not be tolerated," Clinton said, and underscores that "a peaceful resolution of the issues on the Korean Peninsula will only be possible if North Korea fundamentally changes its behavior."

The secretary said the United States has an "unwavering" commitment to South Korea's security and sovereignty, and praised South Korea's handling of the incident. "We join the Security Council in again expressing our deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims of this tragic attack," she said.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice said July 9 that the U.N. statement sends a "crystal clear" message to North Korea.

"The Security Council condemns and deplores this attack; it warns against any further attacks; and insists on full adherence to the Korean Armistice Agreement," Rice said. The statement shows "strong international consensus condemning this attack and is the result of close cooperation among council members and with South Korea," and it "underscores the Security Council's strong commitment to maintain peace and security on the Korean Peninsula," she said.

"Today you have seen the international community stand with South Korea in the face of this attack and determined to prevent any future threats to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula," Rice said.

The text of the statement condemned the attack that led to the sinking of the Cheonan and deplored the loss of life, determining that "such an incident endangers peace and security in the region and beyond," and underscoring "the importance of preventing further such attacks or

hostilities against the [Republic of Korea] or in the region."

It also called for all parties to fully adhere to the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement and encouraged a peaceful settlement to the conflict through the resumption of direct dialogue and negotiations.

An international joint civilian-military investigation that included experts from South Korea, Australia, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States concluded in June that North Korea was responsible for the attack on the Cheonan. North Korea, however, has denied culpability.

Investigation co-chairman Yoon Duk-yong presented evidence to the Security Council in June showing how the investigation had concluded that the Cheonan was "sunk by a torpedo which was made in North Korea and the launching was also done by a North Korean midget submarine."

The U.N. statement said that "in view of the findings of the Joint Civilian-Military Investigation Group led by the [Republic of Korea] with the participation of five nations, which concluded that [North Korea] was responsible for sinking the Cheonan, the Security Council expresses its deep concern," while also noting North Korea's denial of responsibility.

The State Department's acting spokesman, Mark Toner, told reporters July 9 that the U.N. statement "accomplishes our goals," and said the United States is pleased that the Security Council "spoke with one voice" on the incident.

"It provides a unanimous condemnation of the attack. It legitimizes the findings of the joint civilian-military investigation group and their finding of North Korean responsibility. It also praises the Republic of Korea for their restraint in handling the incident," Toner said.

The United States would like North Korea "to acknowledge and to accept the responsibility for its actions," Toner said.

Russian Spy Case Resolved Though Prisoner Exchange

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Vienna's international airport was the scene July 9 of the largest prisoner exchange between Russia and the United States since the end of the Cold War, and U.S. officials say the handling of the case involving 10 Russian sleeper agents who were arrested in late June reflects progress in the U.S.-Russian relationship

as well as an important success for U.S. law enforcement and intelligence personnel.

Senior Obama administration officials told reporters July 8 that the 10 Russian agents had pleaded guilty earlier in the day to conspiring to act as agents of the Russian Federation without notifying U.S. authorities. Those who had been living in the United States under false names were required to disclose their true Russian identities and forfeit some of their U.S. assets, and the 10 agreed never to return to the United States without authorization from the U.S. attorney general.

The U.S. Department of Justice said Russian agents "Richard Murphy" and "Cynthia Murphy" admitted their real names are Vladimir Guryev and Lydia Guryev, "Michael Zottoli" and "Patrica Mills" said their real names are Mikhail Kutsik and Natalia Pereverzeva, "Donald Howard Heathfield" and "Tracey Lee Ann Foley" acknowledged they are really Andrey Bezrukov and Elena Vavilova, and "Juan Lazaro" said his real name is Mikhail Anatonljevich Vasenkov.

Three other defendants, Vicky Pelaez, Anna Chapman and Mikhail Semenko, were operating under their true names. Only Pelaez was not a Russian citizen.

In return for the expulsion of the 10 individuals, Russia released four individuals who were in prison after being convicted of spying for Western countries.

The arrangement "was based on national security as well as humanitarian grounds," a senior official said. "After many years of monitoring the [Russian] individuals, we were confident that we'd gain no significant national security benefit from their further incarceration. Instead, we took the opportunity to secure the release of the four Russian individuals, several of whom are in poor health."

The official said that "in many respects, the handling of this case and its aftermath reflects the progress that we've made in U.S.-Russian relations." Although the Russian foreign ministry initially denied the charges against the individuals, "the Russian government moved very quickly to resolve the spy scandal, including by immediately acknowledging the Russian citizenship of the individuals involved."

The United States continues to pursue a "full agenda" with Russia, as indicated by President Obama's June summit with President Dmitry Medvedev, and the official expressed confidence that the Obama administration's new approach to Russia "will continue to advance our strategic interests."

"No one should be surprised that some vestiges of the past remain or that Russia has an active intelligence

service. But the rolling up of this network ... is a significant success for [the] U.S. law enforcement and intelligence community, and we're pleased that its aftermath has been handled quickly and pragmatically," the official said.

A second official said that having the agents stripped of their ability to operate in the United States and the shutdown of a spy program that had been running for many years was an important achievement for U.S. national security. "I think, for the future, we have demonstrated our very strong counterintelligence capabilities, and that ought to serve as a warning to any other governments that might try to undertake a similar kind of operation in the future."

The official said the children of the Russian agents could leave the United States at any time, depending on the wishes of their parents and any applicable requirements of U.S. law, and said their residency is "a matter between the parents and the children."

The prisoner exchange occurred in Vienna July 9, with two planes arriving within minutes of each other and parking in a remote section of the Schwechat Airport tarmac.

The arrangement "is something we sorted out together," the official said, adding "we've had some experience in doing this in the past."

The spy case and the prisoner exchange brought back memories of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, when thousands of convicted or accused agents on both sides were traded or repatriated. Many such exchanges occurred at the Glienicke Bridge that divided the former East and West Germany.

Among the more famous spy swaps was the U.S. pilot Francis Gary Powers, whose U-2 spy plane was shot down over the Soviet Union in 1960. Powers was traded in 1962 for Rudolf Abel, who had been posing as a photographer in Brooklyn and passing messages to his Soviet handlers through a hollow coin.

Soviet Jewish dissident and future Israeli politician Natan Sharansky was traded in 1986 for several Soviet spies including Karl Koecher, who was the only Soviet mole known to have penetrated the CIA. The same year, American journalist Nicholas Daniloff was traded for Gennady Zakharov, a Soviet official at the United Nations who had been arrested in New York after receiving classified military documents.

U.S. Health Institute Funds 10 Global Malaria Research Centers

Ten newly funded projects will focus on areas where malaria is endemic

Washington — Thanks to approximately \$14 million in first-year funding from the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), 10 new research centers are joining the fight to control and ultimately eliminate malaria worldwide.

Infection by malaria-causing parasites results in about 240 million cases and 850,000 deaths around the globe annually.

The awards, renewable for six years, will establish international centers of excellence for malaria research (ICEMR) in regions where malaria is endemic, including parts of Africa, Asia, the Pacific islands and Latin America, NIAID announced July 8.

The regions include some of the focus countries of the President's Malaria Initiative, an effort that since 2005 has worked to fight malaria in parts of the world most affected by the disease. Teams of scientists involved in the program will conduct research in more than 20 countries. Specific locations at which the research will be conducted have been deliberately left flexible, according to NIAID, an organization within the United States' National Institutes of Health.

Projects funded by the grants include:

- Malaria Transmission and the Impact of Control Efforts in Southern Africa, headed by Dr. Peter Agre.
- The Center for the Study of Complex Malaria in India, headed by Jane Carlton.
- The Southeast Asia Malaria Research Center, headed by Liwang Cui.
- The Program for Resistance, Immunology, Surveillance & Modeling of Malaria in Uganda, headed by Dr. Matthew Dorsey.
- The Latin American Center for Malaria Research and Control, headed by Dr. Socrates Herrera-Valencia.
- Research to Control and Eliminate Malaria in Southeast Asia and Southwest Pacific, headed by Dr. James Kazura.
- Population-Based Approach to Malaria Research and Control in West Africa, head by Dr. Donald Krogstad.
- Malaria Evolution in South Asia, headed by Pradipsinh Rathod.
- Determinants of Malaria Disease in Malawi, headed by Terrie Taylor.
- The Peruvian/Brazilian Amazon Center of Excellence in Malaria, headed by Dr. Joseph Vinetz.

"One of our primary goals with these centers is to fund cutting-edge research in malaria-endemic areas that will

keep up with the rapidly changing epidemiology of the disease," said NIAID Director Anthony S. Fauci.

Malaria has been eliminated from many parts of the globe, but 40 percent of the world's population still lives in areas where they are at risk of contracting the disease. According to Dr. Lee Hall, chief of the parasitology and international programs branch at NIAID, effective malaria control requires research in multiple settings on the complex interactions among the parasite, its mosquito carriers, the local ecology and the human host.

"The ICEMR program seeks to address this need by creating a network of multidisciplinary research centers in malaria-endemic settings," Hall said. "The centers aim to generate critical knowledge, tools and evidence-based strategies to support intervention and control programs by government organizations and health care institutions."

The centers seek to integrate clinical and field approaches with laboratory-based immunologic, molecular and genomic methods. They will adapt their research to changes in malaria epidemiology and emerging research needs as well as opportunities within specific regions.

Each center will conduct multidisciplinary research on the epidemiology, transmission and pathogenesis of malaria; conduct special projects to capitalize on new opportunities and emerging public health needs; and train researchers from malaria-endemic areas.

Overall, these centers are expected to bring critical infrastructure to these endemic regions and help build training and research capacity to combat malaria worldwide, according to NIAID.

Virginia Tech Home Wins Solar Decathlon Europe

House produces more power than it uses; there may be a market for it

By Karin Rives
Staff Writer

Washington — Americans get less than 1 percent of their electricity from the sun, but that humble statistic doesn't discourage Corey McCalla and other students at Virginia Tech who brought their high-tech, energy-producing home to Solar Decathlon Europe in Madrid, Spain, in June and conquered the competition.

Their house design, called Lumenhaus, uses a mix of flexible solar power roof panels, geothermal heating, an open floor design and natural heating and lighting from the sun to provide the kind of comfort and lifestyle many people in a country such as the United States have come to expect.

That, along with its affordability, gives Lumenhaus market viability, says McCalla, who recently graduated from Virginia Tech with a degree in architecture. Virginia Tech is the common name for the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia.

“Our intent with the house was that you wouldn’t have to sacrifice anything you’re used to,” McCalla said. “A lot of houses that try to be energy efficient become tight boxes with few windows, but we decided to make it as light as possible because that makes it look larger than it really is.”

The team of three faculty members and 16 students who traveled to Madrid topped 16 other solar houses built by university teams from six other countries: China, Finland, France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. But the competition was close. Virginia Tech beat Germany’s University of Applied Sciences Rosenheim by less than one point. That was still a big leap forward for Lumenhaus, which had finished 13th when the Solar Decathlon was held in Washington in 2009. Video from that competition is available on YouTube.

The Virginia Tech students had a hunch they were on the right track after their house design was invited to the National Building Museum in Washington in 2009, and then to Times Square in New York in January where it was on display for 48 hours.

The Solar Decathlon was created by the U.S. Department of Energy in the late 1990s, and the first event took place on the National Mall in Washington in 2002. This was the first year Spain hosted the competition after the U.S. and Spanish governments agreed to alternate the event between their countries. The purpose of the Solar Decathlon is to encourage students to invest time and skills in a new generation of sustainable homes.

“These students are tomorrow’s leaders in helping develop a clean-energy economy,” Steven Chu, the U.S. secretary of energy, said when announcing the 2011 competition teams a few months ago. “Their innovative projects will help raise public awareness about energy efficiency, help save consumers money and reduce carbon pollution.”

SOLAR POWER FOR THE GRID

To maximize natural light and heat, the north and south sides of the Lumenhaus are built with glass walls. Automatic sliding panels filter the sunlight and adjust to changing weather conditions or privacy needs, keeping indoor temperatures even. The photovoltaic panels on the roof produce a net surplus of electricity for the house, which means the homeowner can sell excess power back to the grid. The geothermal system, meanwhile, provides

warm water and radiant heating in the concrete slab that makes up the floor of the house.

At 650 square feet (60 square meters), the one-bedroom, rectangular house is designed to make the best use possible of all spaces. The kitchen counter can be pulled out and become a bar, for example. But the home is also modular, which means one house can be stacked on top of another to create more space for growing families, or even multifamily homes. One module, if mass produced in a factory, would cost about \$250,000, making it affordable in certain markets in the United States and beyond, McCalla said.

The young architect plans to continue to work on sustainable designs for the residential or commercial markets. “I don’t think [there is] any architect nowadays that would not focus on energy efficiency,” McCalla said. “And with the price of solar coming down and laws changing to make it more accessible for people, the market will grow. Plus, there are so many other ways for capturing energy now that are better than using coal and oil.”

According to the Solar Energy Industries Association, the nation’s solar energy capacity grew 36 percent in 2009, thanks in part to government investments and subsidies. On July 3, for example, the U.S. Department of Energy announced a \$1.45 billion loan guarantee to Abengoa Solar, a company that plans to build a 250-megawatt solar power generating station in the Arizona desert, the first of its kind.

Role of Muslim Women in Enriching American Society Spotlighted

Convention session focuses on initiatives of four Muslim-American women

By M. Scott Bortot
Staff Writer

Chicago — Four Muslim-American women — an educator, a politician, a publisher and a social worker — are leading initiatives that touch the lives of thousands of Americans.

On July 3, these women shared their stories with hundreds of others at the “Standing Strong: Women Creating Legacy Communities” session of the Islamic Society of North America’s annual convention in Chicago.

Moderated by human rights activist Aisha Al-Adawiya, the session highlighted Muslim-American women who combine faith with talent to improve their society. One way to start building a community is by running for political office, which is what Rashida Tlaib did in 2008 — and won.

The child of Palestinian immigrants became the first Muslim woman elected to the Michigan state House of Representatives. But getting there was not easy. Without name recognition, Tlaib campaigned door to door in her district, walking so much that she went through several pairs of shoes.

As part of her campaign strategy, Tlaib delivered cards to residents promising them a visit.

"When I showed up, people were like, 'You actually came. You came to my house,'" Tlaib said, adding that most people thought she would send volunteers in her place. "It just motivated me more because of the smiles on their faces with the assurance that possibly there would be change and possibly there would be someone there [for them] that would be a good public servant."

Tlaib won 44 percent of the vote in the eight-candidate Democratic Party primary. She garnered a whopping 90 percent of votes in the general election. Her district is 40 percent Latino, 30 percent non-Latino white, 25 percent African American and 2 percent Arab American.

"It is wonderful that many of my residents know that I am Muslim and call me when they want to do something special for my son during Easter and give him an Easter basket. ... It's really wonderful because they accept me and they know that Islam is a very compassionate religion through the work that I'm doing," Tlaib said.

Since coming to office, Tlaib has provided free tax-preparation service to low-income families, offered case management to residents on such issues as human services and utility assistance, and distributed more than 9,000 free books to children to increase literacy.

Tlaib said she hopes other Muslim women follow her example of community engagement.

"I can't wait to see many of my Muslim sisters out there doing the same thing that I'm doing ... and being genuine, because we are females and Allah made us that way, we are always in our hearts able to do [politics] in a very unique way," she said.

Robina Niaz, a Pakistani-born immigrant to America, did not always want to be a leader. But after working for years in New York City as a social worker, she saw a need to help those without a voice in her Muslim community.

"I was very reluctant to accept the title of leader," Niaz said. "I thought that is not what I do, that is not what I am, I am just an ordinary worker and I'm serving humanity."

In 2004, working from her kitchen table, Niaz founded

Turning Point for Women and Families, a New York-based organization that addresses domestic violence in the Muslim community. Today, more than two dozen volunteers work with her to help women and children in need.

Domestic abuse cuts across lines of faith.

"I worked with many Muslim women and non-Muslim women, and what I saw was this intense denial about an issue that was ripping the fabric of our homes," Niaz said. "I believe that if our homes are not safe, if women can't live life without violence, if children can't stop being abused, then you can't have societies that are either nurturing or compassionate."

Niaz's good work is not going unnoticed. In 2009, Cable News Network named her a hero in its "Protecting the Powerless" category, and the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Center at Georgetown University in Washington featured her as one of its 500 most influential Muslims.

For Niaz, standing up for what is right is an integral part of being Muslim.

"As Muslims, we are reminded that if we see injustice going on anywhere, even if you have to bear witness against your kin or yourself, you do it," she said.

During the 1990s, Tayyibah Taylor noticed that Muslim-American women lacked a voice in the media that defined them. Rather than complain, she decided to do something. Rather than work in mainstream media, Taylor decided to create an alternative that focuses on Muslim women.

The result was Azizah magazine.

"Azizah magazine is dedicated to be the voice of Muslim women," Taylor said. "It is dedicated to sharing our stories and allowing Muslims to have the conversation about our issues instead of other people talking about us and setting our agenda."

The news media are a powerful tool in the hands of Muslim women.

"Media is a way to shape opinions. And if people have a negative opinion about us ... it is not for them to change, it is for us to create the change," Taylor said.

Taylor has developed a formula for Muslims that she said will build strong communities. Called the Seven T's, it is based on takwa (piety), thankfulness and talent, for starters.

"I believe that Allah, to whom is ascribed all majesty and

perfection, has placed in each and every one of us more talent than we can use in seven lifetimes," she said. "It is incumbent on us to recognize what talents you have within you and use that not only for the sake of your family and your community, but also for the larger umma, and God willing, for nature and for the world."

Tenacity, thoughtfulness, tenderness and tawakkul (placing trust in God) are the other T's.

Taylor stressed the importance of tenacity for Muslim women to achieve their goals.

"I believe that we can either choose to be spectators to our own destinies or shape and control that destiny. It is a very powerful idea," Taylor said. "You have to have perseverance and tenacity to really create the community that we want."

Debbie Almontaser's legacy as an educator is a study in perseverance.

Seeing a need for her community to learn about Arab culture and history, Almontaser founded the Khalil Gibran International Academy in Brooklyn, New York. The academy is the first English-Arabic public school in America that offers courses that focus on Arabic language and culture.

A former principal of the academy, Almontaser is working toward a doctoral degree in urban school leadership education. But she doesn't want to stop there.

"I am committed to making the Arabic language an additional foreign language option in the New York City public schools," Almontaser said.

With nearly two decades of experience in education development, the daughter of Yemeni immigrants does more than teach. Almontaser spearheaded the adoption of Arab Heritage Week in New York and is active in interfaith work. For Muslim women to make a difference, she said, they need to engage their communities.

"Stay focused and continue to think about expanding your role in this society. This is our country, and it is our role and responsibility to take on such matters to pursue happiness and pursue anything that we set our minds to," Almontaser said. "This is what this great country is about. It is about learning and understanding the great diversity that exists within the country and that we cultivate and galvanize collaboration and coordination to serve the betterment of humanity."

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