

American

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Final U.S. Combat Brigade Leaves Iraq

Washington — As the last U.S. combat brigade rolled out of Iraq August 19 ending a seven-year military operation that toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein, the focus of the U.S. mission shifted to training and supporting Iraqi security forces, senior U.S. defense officials say.

“The focus will be on advising and assisting,” Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell said during an MSNBC News interview.

Morrell said there are still 56,000 U.S. military personnel in Iraq, but that by the end of August that number will drop to 50,000. In June 2009, U.S. forces withdrew from Iraqi cities entirely and missions conducted after that date were at the specific request of the Iraqi government and were joint missions with Iraqi security forces, he added.

The remaining 50,000 U.S. military personnel will be withdrawn from the country by December 2011 under an agreement reached between the United States and Iraq earlier, another Pentagon spokesman, Bryan Whitman, said, according to news reports.

“As a practical matter, we have now been conducting stability operations for the last several months,” Whitman said in an interview with the American Forces Press Service. “It takes us from a military lead to a civilian lead.”

In addition to training the Iraqi army, U.S. Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard personnel will be conducting training programs for other Iraqi units as well, the Pentagon said.

“We still have a significant amount of people here. We still have a significant amount of influence to conduct stability operations to support this government as they continue to grow in capability and capacity,” Major General Stephen Lanza, a spokesman for U.S. forces in Iraq, said August 19 in an interview with Fox Television News.

“More importantly, our mission here will allow Iraq not only to grow as a country, but also to expand their security, and also economic development throughout the region, which is extremely important,” he added.

Part of the role of the remaining U.S. troops is to assist with counterterrorism operations for the Iraqi security forces, Lanza said. And the military will also support provincial reconstruction teams that are working for the U.S. State Department, which is helping to build civil capacity and develop civil institutions, he added.

The Pentagon said the final U.S. combat unit crossed the Iraqi border into Kuwait before dawn on August 19. The unit and its equipment will be shipped back to the United States.

U.S. Increases Pakistan Aid to \$150 Million, Urges More Help

Secretary Clinton: Flood damage “almost hard to fathom”

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Calling on the international community to answer Pakistan’s request for help as it endures the worst natural disaster in its history, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced that the United States is increasing its Pakistan flood relief assistance by \$60 million, bringing its total commitment to date to more than \$150 million.

Speaking August 19 at a special meeting of the U.N. General Assembly that was called by the Pakistani government, Clinton said torrential monsoon rains that have caused massive flooding in the Indus River Valley have caused so much damage that “it is almost hard to fathom,” and that as the rains continue, the extent of the devastation is “difficult to gauge.”

“This flooding has already affected more people than the Indian Ocean tsunami, the Haiti earthquake and the 2005 Pakistan earthquake combined,” Clinton said, with more than 20 million people affected, 2 million forced to flee their homes, hundreds of destroyed bridges, and more than 800,000 homes damaged or destroyed. Facing food and water shortages, the population is also at risk of cholera and other waterborne diseases. Clinton added that crops and agricultural fields have been lost and experts do not expect the flooding to recede until mid-September.

At the start of the U.N. meeting, half of the U.N.’s August 11 \$459 million emergency flash appeal had been met, which Clinton described as “a solid start,” but said there is a need to “close the gap.”

“The combined effort so far pales against the magnitude of the challenge,” she said, “and, unfortunately, we believe it is likely to get worse before it gets better.” She urged fellow delegates at the United Nations to “embrace a spirit of compassion and make it our mission to provide that relief.”

Approximately \$92 million of the \$150 million U.S. contribution is in direct support of the August 11 flash appeal, Clinton said.

“These funds are being used to provide critical supplies and support operations of the Pakistan National Disaster

Management Authority and other organizations inside Pakistan. The United States is providing technical assistance and mobilizing military and civilian resources as well," she said.

Clinton said U.S. civilian and military helicopters responded to assistance requests from the Pakistani government at the outset of the crisis, and so far have carried more than 6,000 Pakistanis to safety and distributed more than 1 million pounds (453,592 kilos) of relief supplies. The United States has also provided enough heavy-duty waterproof sheeting to create temporary shelters for more than 100,000 people and supplied Pakistani authorities with concrete-cutting saws, rescue boats, water filtration units and prefabricated bridges, she said.

"On behalf of President Obama and the American people, I want to state our resolve to help Pakistan meet the immediacy of this crisis and then to recover from it," she said.

"I want the people of Pakistan to know that the United States will stand with you during this crisis. We will be with you as rivers rise and fall. We will be with you as you replant your fields and repair your roads. We will be with you as you meet the long-term challenges to build a stronger nation and a better future," she said.

Earlier August 19, Secretary Clinton announced the creation of the State Department's Pakistan Relief Fund, through which U.S.-based mobile phone callers can text "FLOOD" to the number 27722 to make a \$10 contribution.

"Every dollar makes a difference," she told American audiences in a video message. "Five dollars can buy 50 high-energy bars, providing much needed nutrition; \$10 can provide a child or mother with a blanket; and about \$40 can buy material to shelter a family of four," she said.

"Now is a time for our shared humanity to move us to help," Clinton said, and work to "ensure that future generations in Pakistan have a chance to have the bright future they deserve and fulfill their own God-given potential."

In an August 19 interview with Pakistan's GEO-TV, Clinton acknowledged that she is "never satisfied with relief and rescue" efforts, since it takes a long time to assess the extent of damage and mobilize relief assistance.

She urged the people and institutions of Pakistan to "pull together" during this crisis. "There's a time to be critical and pointing fingers and trying to score political points, and then there's a time to put that to one side and save lives and rebuild Pakistan. And that's what I hope is

happening," she said.

She also said she hopes that Pakistan's acceptance of Indian assistance "demonstrates that despite years of misunderstanding and conflicts and threats and difficulties, in the face of a natural disaster of this significance, the people of India and Pakistan can come together."

The current U.S. humanitarian relief assistance funding comes in addition to the \$7.5 billion in civilian aid under the 2009 Kerry-Lugar-Berman Act. The long-term projects planned under that law include infrastructure, energy, clean water, health and agricultural improvements.

Clinton said that in the aftermath of the flooding, she has ordered a complete review of the U.S. civilian aid that has been provided thus far.

"I was just in Pakistan, as you know, last month announcing some very important projects to bring water and electricity to people throughout the country. I announced we could perhaps repair and modernize power plants. The power plants may be gone. So I think all of us are struck by the scale of this destruction and we're really working hard to help people now but also prepare for the future," she said.

Business Suits South Asian Women

By Phuong Ly
Special Correspondent

Washington – Need and enterprise are propelling more women in South Asia into leadership roles in the work force, from holding management positions in companies to forming their own businesses.

As the region becomes intertwined with the global economy, the number of nonagricultural jobs in sectors such as textile factories and call centers has boomed. Companies can't afford to turn away female workers, and families can't afford to not have their women members work. From those entry-level jobs in factories or service centers, women are gaining experience, confidence and a boost up the corporate ladder. Many graduate to entrepreneurship. The effects continue across societies, as the sight of women in business becomes more common.

"The economic reality turns into an opportunity," said Teresita Schaffer, a former U.S. ambassador to Sri Lanka who is now director of the South Asia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The growing economic power of women is difficult to measure. Statistics of women in management positions are scarce and unreliable. In many instances, a woman may run a company, but put her assets under the name of

a male relative. But in specific industries, it is clear that women are making strides. In India, from 2006 to 2008, the number of women in the high-tech industry jumped nearly 60 percent to about 671,000. Today, women make up about one-fourth of all information technology workers in India, according to the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM), which collaborates with the Indian government to set policy and practices for the country's information technology industry.

The boom in microlending has prompted many lower-income women to strike out on their own, using small loans to start their businesses. Nearly all of the 8.1 million borrowers of Grameen Bank in Bangladesh are women. South Asia is the epicenter of the microlending trend, comprising nearly half of all borrowers worldwide.

The rise of women as economic entities has brought changes in societies' perceptions of gender roles. Schaffer says that 30 years ago in Bangladesh, for example, the CARE organization started a program to help destitute widows by paying them to do road-repair work. Critics doubted the program could work: The image of women carrying rocks on their heads seemed so unconventional. But after CARE officials approached community leaders, emphasizing the economic needs, the program was approved and was a success. On a much wider scale, as the garment industry flourished and more workers were needed, families allowed young women to take those jobs. Despite some families' worries that their daughters were taking undesirable roles, as those women made money, they became more attractive to prospective suitors. The notion of women as wage earners became more widely accepted.

"People's concept of the ideal behavior is very traditional, but what they're prepared to live with is much broader because of the economic reality and their needs," Schaffer said.

Moving from entry-level worker to manager or company owner can be much harder for women to do than it is for them to convince family members that they can take a first job. But Schaffer said that progress will be made, just as it has been made in Western countries. When Schaffer joined the U.S. Department of State's Foreign Service in 1966, some jobs were closed to women, she said. By the time she retired in 1997, a woman, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, was running the State Department. Still, even as women break ground in new job fields, they must find ways to balance their new work responsibilities with their traditional roles of child care and other family obligations. Close-knit extended families – an advantage that South Asian women have over some Western women – may help relieve some of the child-care burdens, but women are still expected to manage a

slew of familial duties such as taking care of ill relatives. A 2009 NASSCOM study of female workers in India's tech industry encouraged companies to provide mentors and training opportunities and develop career paths that provide breaks for family obligations. The study states that Indian society as a whole needs to recognize the needs of working women, and families should "extend support and share burden of balance."

Despite the hurdles, the next generation is expected to see even more women thrive in the work force. Several South Asian countries, including India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, have achieved gender parity at the primary school level, according to the World Bank. In Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, gender parity has reached the secondary school level. In India, women make up more than 40 percent of the students at engineering colleges, the steppingstones to stable, middle-class jobs, according to the Indian government. In the mid-1980s, no more than 8 percent of engineering college students in India were women.

Schaffer said that it is a widely accepted tenet that once women achieve higher levels of education, they're more likely to ensure that their children will do the same.

And better-educated women, experts believe, will mean more business ownership by South Asian women and greater economic growth for the region. "Women-run, small- and medium-size enterprises are proven drivers of [gross domestic product], and when they are able to access the tools that they need, from skills training to education to market access, property rights, technology and credit, they can make an enormous difference," said Ambassador Melanne Verveer, the U.S. ambassador-at-large for global women's issues, at a recent event in Washington.

Statement by Ambassador Rice on World Humanitarian Day

Rice calls upon all nations to provide humanitarian relief, wherever needed

United States Mission to the United Nations
Office of Press and Public Diplomacy
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Statement by Ambassador Susan Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, commemorating World Humanitarian Day, August 19, 2010

Seven years ago, a truck bomb exploded beneath the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq, killing 22 people and wounding more than 100, including the UN envoy, Sérgio Vieira de Mello, and three American civilians. On this second annual World Humanitarian

Day, the United States remembers the victims of the Canal Hotel bombing and others like them: citizens who have given their expertise, devotion, and, all too often, their lives providing relief for the suffering. We also recognize the growing depth and complexity of humanitarian challenges and honor the efforts of today's brave humanitarians to meet them. On this day of remembrance, we call upon all nations and parties to assist and protect the individuals who work to provide humanitarian relief, wherever it is needed.

Today in Pakistan's flood-ravaged regions, more than 14 million people urgently need help. The United States has already provided approximately \$90 million to assist Pakistanis in harm's way. U.S. helicopters have evacuated 5,912 people and delivered 717,713 pounds of relief supplies. Still, the scale of the catastrophe defies imagination; it requires the efforts of countless humanitarians and aid organizations to assist the homeless, the hungry, and the sick. Cash contributions help these organizations meet the needs of humanitarians on the ground, and can be transferred quickly. Texting the word "SWAT" to 50555 directs a \$10 donation to the UN Refugee Agency for tents and emergency aid to displaced families. At www.interaction.org, visitors may access a list of organizations accepting cash donations for flood relief.

On World Humanitarian Day, the United States also recognizes the efforts of aid workers in Haiti, including those who tragically lost their lives in January's earthquake. At once, the disaster devastated Haiti's fragile foundations and killed many people who were best qualified to help Haitians rebuild. The expertise of the humanitarians there is indispensable. We grieve with the families of those who were lost.

Across the world this year, aid workers risked great danger by responding to environmental disaster. But the United States also notes with profound alarm the rise in premeditated violence targeting aid workers - including the recent murder of ten NGO workers, six of them Americans, by the Taliban in Northern Afghanistan. Acts such as these shock the conscience and further energize efforts to defeat violent extremism, but their numbers continue to rise: from 65 victims of serious security incidents in 1999, for example, to 278 victims in 2009. In light of these terrible acts, we condemn the persistence of insidious rhetoric by political actors who portray aid workers as outsiders representing foreign interests, governments, and ideologies. As the United Nations has noted, most humanitarians come from the countries in which they work. They are inspired by the principle of impartiality that guides all aid work, and come from a variety of nationalities, ethnicities, and religious communities. We join the global community in rejecting attacks on humanitarians, and rededicating ourselves to

ensuring that aid can be delivered without fear.

Assistance to humanitarians is both a moral issue and a practical imperative for global security. Yet even when aid workers are buttressed by supportive national governments and parties to conflict, their work carries grave risks. Amid flood waters in Pakistan, humanitarians are called to address hardship on a scale that is nearly without precedent, and serve bravely despite facing the very same dangers themselves. On this and all days, we are grateful for their work and we honor their enduring pursuit of security, dignity, and hope for all people.

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