

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## United States Offers Support for U.N. Mission in Afghanistan

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — The U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has the full support of the United States in its work assisting the Afghan people as they build a democratic society, provide for their own security and create a responsive government, says U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice.

The United States' goal in Afghanistan, Rice said, remains unchanged: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat the terrorist group al-Qaida and prevent its return as well as the return of the former Taliban regime. The United States welcomes UNAMA's commitment to align assistance behind the Afghan government's priorities, Rice said in Security Council debate on Afghanistan and the UNAMA mission September 29.

"More international forces are focused on reversing the Taliban's momentum," Rice said. "We're providing security for the Afghan people. We're working in partnership with the Afghan security forces so that Afghans themselves can assume more and more responsibility for their country's security."

A considerable amount of U.S. military operations is dedicated to blocking the return of Taliban insurgents to power. They were ousted by the United States and international coalition forces in 2001.

The U.N. mission in Afghanistan was created May 28, 2002, as part of a mandate to provide political and strategic advice for the peace process, provide support to the Afghan government, promote the coherence of international aid by assisting in identifying priorities and helping coordinate donor activities, foster national dialogue and encourage regional engagement.

President Obama said in a speech last December that the United States is committed to ensuring that the transition to Afghan-led security, while considering conditions on the ground, is irreversible. The Obama administration plans to begin gradually reducing the number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan in July 2011.

Rice said the transition will be managed through a process of joint cooperation.

"Some parts of Afghanistan are nearly ready for transition now; others will require more time and effort on all of our parts," Rice told the Security Council. "Based upon Afghanistan's transition plan, we will help Afghanistan meet its goal of taking the lead on security by 2014."

To meet that objective, Rice added, the United States is providing extensive training and mentoring for the Afghan army and police forces, which is critical to ensuring the transition happens as planned.

At the same time, Rice said, this does not lessen the U.S. commitment to the Afghan people. "The United States will continue to provide assistance to help build the capacities of Afghan institutions to withstand and reduce the threat posed by extremism," she said.

One of the realities of the assistance process, Rice said, is that U.S. efforts are being adapted to local needs to broaden support at the provincial and district levels with the aim of improving effectiveness and accountability.

Rice praised the work of the Security Council's al-Qaida and Taliban sanctions committee for removing the names of individuals who have come forward to support the new Afghan government and renounced the Taliban insurgency. She also praised the addition to the sanctions list of new individuals with strong links to the Taliban. She said the sanctions committee's actions foster greater stability across the country.

In turning to the Afghan parliamentary elections concluded September 18, Rice said they were the first held entirely by the Afghan government since the fall of the Taliban in 2001.

"These preparations resulted in a historic step for the Afghan people," Rice said. And she said the elections would not have been possible without the security provided by Afghan security forces, which worked to block the Taliban insurgents from disrupting the electoral process.

"It will be some time before the results of these elections are finalized," Rice said. "Independent Afghan electoral institutions will now count the votes, respond to complaints and allegations of fraud and ultimately announce results that reflect the will of the Afghan people."

The UNAMA will remain closely engaged with the Afghan electoral institutions as the votes are counted and tabulated over the next few weeks, she said.

## Pressure Increases to Discourage Energy Investment in Iran

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration is working with international companies invested in Iran's energy sector to encourage them to withdraw, announcing September 30 that four major energy companies have

agreed to terminate their investments. And the United States has imposed economic sanctions on a Swiss-based company that has continued its dealings with Iran's petroleum sector.

Speaking to reporters in Washington September 30, Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg said these are "the first public actions involving companies investing in Iran's energy sector" since U.S. sanctions against Iran were expanded by the U.S. Congress in the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act (CISADA) on July 1.

The Iranian government has been using revenues from its energy sector to fund its nuclear program, which the United States and others in the international community are concerned is being used to develop nuclear weapons. Iran has also been using procurement for its energy sector to acquire dual-use items that can be used for its nuclear weapons activities, Steinberg said.

In its actions, the United States is not trying to "take down the Iranian economy or harm ordinary Iranians," but target those who can make significant investments in Iran's energy sector and contribute to its procurement efforts, he said.

The U.N. Security Council responded to Iran's continued nuclear activities by imposing additional sanctions under Resolution 1929. Those measures were supplemented by unilateral sanctions from the United States, the European Union, Japan, South Korea, Australia and Canada.

Under the CISADA, the United States is penalizing the Swiss-based Naftiran Intertrade Company (NICO), an international trading company that is wholly owned by the National Iranian Oil Company, Steinberg said.

"NICO has provided hundreds of millions of dollars of financing for development projects in Iran's petroleum sector, and sanctioning NICO today will further isolate the company from the international business community," he said.

Steinberg said that under the U.S. sanctions, NICO is prohibited from "receiving export assistance from the [Export-Import Bank of the United States], licenses from export from the United States, private U.S. bank loans exceeding \$10 million in any 12-month period, and will be barred from any procurement contracts with the United States."

He also said that four major oil companies – Total of France, Statoil of Norway, Eni of Italy and Royal Dutch Shell of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands – have agreed to end their investments in Iran's energy sector and pledged "not to undertake new energy-related

activity that may be sanctionable."

This is "a significant setback to Iran," Steinberg said, praising the leadership and responsibility of the four companies. Steinberg said he hoped their action "will have a very positive and exemplary effect on other companies."

"The goal here is not to impose sanctions for sanctions' sake, but to end companies from doing business with Iran. And so we believe the model that we would like to see every company follow is to follow the model taken by the four European firms," he said.

"A nuclear-armed Iran would severely threaten the security and stability of a part of the world crucial to our interests and the health of the global economy. As a consequence, we believe that the international community should collectively abandon a business-as-usual approach toward Iran," he said.

The State Department is also launching investigations and engaging with other international energy companies that may be breaching sanctions, Steinberg said, but added that their identities would remain confidential "so long as we think it's productive to achieving the results we're trying to achieve."

Across the business world, more companies and investors are concluding that it is too risky to engage in activities with Iran, he said.

"The reputational costs and otherwise are sufficiently severe that they are taking prudential measures to limit their exposure. And we believe ... that message is coming home to roost" inside Iran, he said.

The State Department also released a list of companies reducing their energy-related business with Iran on September 30, and Steinberg said there are also a large number of banks, companies and other entities that publicly have announced they no longer are doing business there.

"We obviously recognize that Iran is going to try to find others to take their place, but the more that pull themselves out, the fewer and fewer options they have. And we continue to go in places where we think that they might be looking for to substitute," he said.

"There is a way forward for them to avoid those consequences," which, he added, "will only grow more serious over time."

"The only effect that matters in the end of the day would be the political decisions that the Iranians make. And so we are trying to make clear to them that if they don't, that

they will continue to face these difficulties, which we are quite confident they are beginning to face," Steinberg said.

### **U.S. Grants Support Cultural Preservation in Central Asia**

By Domenick DiPasquale  
Staff Writer

Washington — The rich cultural legacy of Central Asia is receiving financial support from a U.S. government program that has helped preserve cultural treasures throughout the region, and throughout the world, over the past decade.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation announced that projects in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were among the 63 worldwide that were selected for funding in 2010.

Such support is not new; since the establishment of the Ambassadors Fund in October 2000, a total of 38 preservation projects have been financed in these four nations and Turkmenistan.

The 2010 grants awarded to the Central Asian nations will underwrite an array of projects that mirror the diverse culture, history and traditions of the region.

In Uzbekistan, for example, the Ambassadors Fund grant is supporting the preservation of more than 1,400 "kolips," carved woodblocks once used for printing, which the State Museum of Art has been collecting since 1935. Said to be the largest collection of its kind in the world, the kolips represent the country's 10 different regions and an Uzbek printed fabric and leather tradition that dates back centuries. The grant will make possible conservation treatment to ensure that the woodblocks remain available for research and future use.

The Kyrgyz-Russian Slavonic University in Kyrgyzstan houses an archaeological and ethnographic collection that spans more than 2,000 years, from the 5th century B.C. to the 19th century. The collection includes wooden, ceramic, bronze and gold artifacts recovered beneath and near Lake Issyk Kul, a mountain lake in northeastern Kyrgyzstan. The artifacts have been largely inaccessible to the public because of poor storage conditions and inadequate documentation. Financing from the Ambassadors Fund will help catalog the collection in an electronic database and promote it through a documentary film.

The region's world-famous textile legacy is the focus in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. Projects in both nations aim not only to revitalize ancient crafts in danger of dying out but also to use that tradition of weaving to improve life in

economically depressed regions.

The isolated Pamir Mountain region of southeastern Tajikistan is losing population as its residents seek better employment opportunities elsewhere. The population loss threatens the continued viability of the region's tradition of yak wool handicrafts. The Ambassadors Fund grant is enabling a compilation of traditional designs, identification of artisans currently creating such handicrafts, and the training of a new generation of artisans.

Carpet-making was a historical Kazakh craft that was suppressed during the Soviet era. Because the most experienced carpet-makers are aging, knowledge of this important craft tradition runs the risk of fading into oblivion. A Kazakh nongovernmental organization, Our Heritage, was awarded a grant from the Ambassadors Fund to help restore and promote this carpet-weaving tradition, both preserving indigenous techniques and promoting economic independence for local women by providing them the expertise to market their carpets globally.

### **U.S. Law Protects African Penguin**

Washington — The African penguin (*Spheniscus demersus*), a bird native to Namibia and South Africa, is now listed as an endangered species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973. The listing means the U.S. government has determined the African penguin is in danger of extinction throughout all of its range.

The listing was adopted September 28 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) after a review of scientific information and 604 comments on the proposal submitted by the general public and peer reviewers. The rule, effective October 28, extends special legal protections and opens the door to U.S. support for conservation assistance to nations and organizations working to preserve the African penguin and its habitats.

The African penguin is "in a serious, accelerating decline," according to the Fish and Wildlife Service. The population has declined 60.5 percent in the past 28 years due to reductions in its food supplies and increased competition for food with both the fishing industry and Cape fur seals. In addition, rapid ecosystem changes at the northern end of the penguin's range and moves by prey resources to beyond the foraging range of breeding penguins at the southern end have increased pressures on the African penguin flocks. Oil spills also have contributed to the bird's decline.

Climate change creates more threats through rising sea levels, increasing sea surface temperatures, declines in upwelling intensities and predicted increases in frequency

and intensity of El Niño events in the Benguela marine ecosystem, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Granting foreign species protection under the U.S. Endangered Species Act means that the import or export of any members of the species or their parts or products is prohibited, as is their sale in interstate or foreign commerce. The law also prohibits harassing, harming, pursuing, hunting, shooting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing or collecting listed species within the United States. The law also aims to conserve the ecosystems on which endangered species and threatened species depend.

The Endangered Species Act mandates that the United States will “encourage foreign countries to provide for the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants, including listed species; enter into bilateral or multilateral agreements for the purpose; encourage and assist foreign persons who take fish, wildlife and plants for import to the U.S. for commercial or other purposes to develop and carry out conservation procedures.” It authorizes U.S. aid to train personnel from other nations on wildlife conservation for research and law enforcement purposes, and for law enforcement investigations and research abroad.

The African penguin also is protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), a 1973 international agreement. The United States was among the 21 original signatories.

Unlike the Endangered Species Act, which protects species by addressing a variety of threats to their survival, CITES protects at-risk species primarily through restrictions on commerce. The CITES system for controlling international trade in species in danger of becoming extinct relies on adoption and enforcement of export and import restrictions by signatory nations.

CITES allows for trade in listed species if such trade is not detrimental to a species’ survival. In contrast, the Endangered Species Act permits trade in foreign endangered species only if that trade enhances the survival of the species in its native country. Overall, restrictions in the Endangered Species Act are broader and somewhat stricter than CITES requirements.

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