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Secretaries Clinton, Gates Urge NATO Reform to Meet 21st-Century Threats

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Defense Secretary Robert Gates urged members of NATO to individually and collectively focus on 21st-century threats such as cyberattacks and ballistic missiles and expressed support for a proposed Strategic Concept that was presented to alliance members in Brussels by NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

Speaking with Gates in Brussels on October 14, Clinton said NATO countries face an array of challenges including terrorism, ballistic missiles, cyberattacks and the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

“Relying on the strategies of the past simply will not suffice. NATO began as a regional alliance, but the threats we now face are global, and our perspective must therefore be global as well,” she said.

Clinton also said NATO countries, including the United States, must improve the integration of their military and civilian capacities.

“Today’s security challenges are rarely just military. Usually they are political, and always they are both. They call for the contributions of a wide range of people, from military strategists and weapons specialists to diplomats and development experts,” she said.

Clinton and Gates were joined in Brussels by the other foreign and defense ministers of the 28-nation alliance, as well as Rasmussen, principally to discuss the proposed Strategic Concept, which is the first update of NATO’s long-term security strategy since 1999 and is meant to shape the alliance’s vision for the next 10 years.

The draft concept, which reportedly calls for reforms such as streamlining the alliance’s structure, linking U.S. and European missile defense systems to more effectively counter threats from countries such as Iran, enhancing cooperation with Russia, and focusing more on combating cyberattacks, is expected to be debated and adopted at the upcoming NATO summit that will be held November 19-20 in Lisbon, Portugal.

Rasmussen said October 14 that the meeting in Brussels had resulted in a commitment to modernize the alliance for the 21st century, as well as “a clear mandate for reform,” by which he expected the alliance to agree in Lisbon to a command structure that would reduce personnel from 13,000 people to 9,000 and the number of

NATO agencies from 14 to three “without diminishing the level of ambition of what the alliance can do.”

NATO is moving toward a consensus on how to protect European countries against missile attacks, and “we should make it possible for Russia to cooperate with us and to share the fruit of that cooperation,” Rasmussen said, adding that he hopes Russia will accept an invitation to a NATO-Russia Council summit in Lisbon.

“Based on today’s discussion, I know that the Strategic Concept will actually provide an even stronger framework for NATO’s future. It will be a Strategic Concept that will improve NATO’s capability to address the new threats of today and tomorrow, like terrorism, cyberattacks and missile attacks and other emerging security challenges,” he said.

According to an October 14 article from the American Forces Press Service (AFPS), Clinton and Gates expressed strong support for the draft Strategic Concept in a closed meeting of the foreign and defense ministers.

“The secretary-general’s draft does a good job of capturing the complexity and uncertainty of today’s security environment, and strikes the proper balance between security concerns both in and out of area,” Gates said, according to AFPS.

Clinton said the draft “strikes the right balance” between disarmament and deterrence, as well as with NATO’s relations with Russia and the need to enhance NATO’s capacity for conducting civilian-military operations.

The document’s final version “must express the alliance’s enduring commitment to protect freedom and security through collective defense, crisis management and cooperative security,” as well as meet emerging security challenges and “explain to our publics how NATO will continue to deter and defend against all threats to peace, prosperity or democracy — including terrorism, proliferation and cyberattack,” Clinton said, according to AFPS.

United States, United Nations Urge Cooperation to Fight Hunger

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — A call by U.S. leaders for a comprehensive and cooperative approach to ensure food security for the 925 million hungry people in the world was echoed by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on October 11.

“A growing number of governments, intergovernmental organizations, regional and subregional bodies, businesses and civil society groups are forming

partnerships and implementing joint solutions. Increasingly, their approach is comprehensive – focusing on more stable supplies of food, better access to food and optimizing nutrition at the household level,” Ban said.

His message was to hundreds of delegates from governments, nongovernmental organizations, U.N. bodies, the private sector and philanthropic groups around the world who gathered in Rome for the 36th annual Committee on World Food Security (CFS) conference, held October 11-14. The 2010 session was the first to include members of civil society.

Ertharin Cousin, U.S. ambassador to the Rome-based U.N. food and agriculture agencies and head of the U.S. delegation to the conference, praised the inclusive approach of the conference and highlighted the importance of collaboration to address hunger.

“This problem won’t be solved just by governments. It requires civil society, the private sector, the governments of both donor and developing countries, as well as the U.N. agencies working together. The Committee on World Food Security represents the opportunity for them to come together and speak with an equal voice,” Cousin told America.gov.

Ambassador Patricia Haslach, also a member of the U.S. delegation, said although the number of hungry people has fallen from 2009’s historic high of 1 billion, more progress is needed.

“There’s been a lot of work that’s been done on raising productivity, especially in the staple grains, but where we’re really falling down is on the nutrition side,” Haslach said.

Cousin stressed the importance of combining the efforts of governmental and nongovernmental agencies to provide nutritional support for adults and for children, who Cousin said are most affected by a lack of dietary nutrients.

“Nutrition must include not just medical interventions, but also agricultural support for diverse crops that will ensure more balanced diets, particularly in the first 1,000 days of a child’s life,” she said.

In what she called “fantastic news,” Cousin said finding solutions to the nutrition problem had become an integral part of the committee’s work.

“When we’re talking about ending global hunger, we’re talking about the issue of food security and nutrition. You can’t and you won’t end global hunger unless you also address the issue of nutrition, and that concept has been embraced by CSF,” Cousin said.

Both Cousin and Haslach pointed to another issue taken on by this year’s committee – including gender in agricultural development programs.

Haslach said between 60 percent and 80 percent of the world’s food is produced by women, yet women do not have equal access to financing, technology and education. Investing in women is also beneficial to their local economies, she added.

“If women start to earn a fair wage for the products they’re producing, it’s been proven that women will put it back in feeding their children and providing funding for education,” she said. “It has a multiplier effect, so women are critical.”

The CSF, which serves as a forum to improve global governance efforts on food security, takes place each year ahead of World Food Day, October 16. It is hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development – the three Rome-based U.N. organizations dealing with food.

Maritime Piracy Off Somali Coast a Global Problem

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington – Maritime piracy off the coast of Somalia is not just an African problem but a global challenge of worldwide concern, and the international community must step forward to help.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson and Erastus Mwencha, deputy chairperson of the African Union’s Commission, made that point to reporters in a media round table October 13. Carson and Mwencha spoke to journalists via an electronic hook-up to Paris and Addis Ababa while attending the 2010 African Maritime Safety and Security Conference in Stuttgart, Germany.

Maritime piracy is not an issue solely for Somalia, for the regional states of the Horn in East Africa, or for Africa itself, Carson told reporters. “The African community has borne the brunt of the piracy, and the international response, particularly on the legal side, has been very, very minimal. We know that many countries around the world have put ships out in the Indian Ocean to counter the piracy, but piracy continues to persist for two reasons. One is the lack of a government and an economy on shore and the other one is an absence, the continuation of impunity and the absence of punishment for people who are caught engaged in piracy.”

Carson expressed his government’s “enormous appreciation” to the governments of Kenya and the

Seychelles. "Both of those countries have taken in, prosecuted and jailed more pirates than any other nations around the world," he said.

"Many of the ships that are pirated have ownership which is international and not African, many of those ships are flagged by non-African countries, and many of those ships are crewed by non-African crews," Carson told the reporters. "But in the end, when pirates are captured by an international fleet, the owners of the vessels from different countries refuse to press charges in their countries. The countries that provide most of the crews refuse to press charges against the pirates, including when individuals have been killed and wounded. And many of the countries that flag these vessels refuse to press charges."

"So it is left for the countries in the region to have to take these pirates, put them in their jails, use their court systems, their judges, to prosecute, convict them and then keep them for long periods of time under incarceration."

Citing an example, Carson said: "Recently we saw a vessel ... that vessel was owned by citizens in Europe [but seized by Somali pirates]. It was crewed by Filipinos, and it was flagged by a country in the Caribbean, but yet when the pirates were caught, none of those states involved were willing to prosecute and those pirates eventually had to be taken to Kenya."

"It is important that the international community come forward," Carson stressed. "That countries in and around the globe that own these ships, that provide crews to these ships, that flag these ships, take responsibility for punishing the pirates who are engaged in piracy. It is not just an East Africa problem or an African problem, it is an international problem, and until we can get the international community to stand up on the legal side to prevent this impunity legally, we are going to continue to have problems. The international community has got to stand forth."

Carson said "the United States has done its part and will continue to do its part" to address the problem. "The U.S. over the last three years has only had one vessel kidnapped, the Maersk Alabama. That vessel was not allowed to go into Somali territory. U.S. naval assets were deployed, they rescued the vessel, the captain, killed some of the pirates and brought some of them back to the United States because it was a U.S.-owned and -crewed vessel, brought them back to the United States, where they were prosecuted in New York City and the pirates are now serving jail sentences in New York."

"If, in fact, there are German or French or Dutch or Indian or Pakistani or Japanese vessels — and I'm just using those as an example — and they are attacked, it is

incumbent upon those countries, those countries, to take in the individuals that attack those vessels and prosecute them. If they don't do that, they surely must provide some kind of financial assistance to the countries of East Africa to help defray the cost of dealing with the incarceration of pirates."

Carson added: "Paying ransoms does not help. Paying ransoms [to earn the freedom of a ship, its crew and cargo] only encourages continued piracy."

Picking up on Carson's remarks, the African Union Commission's Mwencha agreed that "the challenges that face Africa today are global, and the solutions can only be global. That's why we are so happy to be here to partner with our friends and partners." Mwencha thanked the U.S. departments of State and Defense and the other agencies "for coming to work with us, to talk about these very important aspects of maritime safety and security."

Mwencha acknowledged that while piracy is a global problem, Africans still "have to do something for ourselves. We have developed and we are developing a strategy. That strategy has a responsibility to an individual level, at the national level, and in the continental level. And that strategy requires that, first of all, we share information. We coordinate. We work together, within the continent. And we have a capacity to be able to ... have our coastlines policed and safeguarded from international pirates, but also those that do illegal fishing, toxic waste and the rest."

To accomplish that, however, "requires resources," he said, "... and that is an element that we also seek to partner with the rest of the international community — to help each other, to be able to help with the problem."

The greatest challenge now facing Africa, Mwencha told reporters, is ignorance — the lack of "knowledge about what needs to be done and what has to be done." He asked the reporters on the call "to pass on this message to the rest of Africa so that Africa can work together for the sake of our continent."

Africa's coastline is about 39,000 kilometers, Mwencha said. "Now that poses an opportunity and a challenge. An opportunity because in that coastline lies great wealth, in which Africa is only getting a small portion. Often we only get to hear about hijacking and piracy, but that's not all about the coastline of Africa. The coastline of Africa is about trade; it is about food security; it is about energy; it is about human trafficking; and it is also about toxic waste. But, above all, it is about governance for the continent and the wealth of the continent."

Also participating in the media round table, which brought together more than 170 participants representing

some 20 African nations, were the African Union Commission, the U.S. Africa Command and representatives from both the public and private sector, along with General William E. "Kip" Ward, commander of the U.S. Africa Command, and Ambassador Vicki Huddleston, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Africa, in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

U.N. Trip Underscored Need for Timely, Credible Sudan Referendums

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Following a weeklong visit to Southern Sudan, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice reported that ahead of the January 9, 2011, referendum on the region's independence, its people are hopeful for the vote, but also concerned that it may not occur on time and that violence could resume between Northern Sudan and Southern Sudan.

In an October 14 statement at the United Nations, Rice underscored the need for the referendums in both Southern Sudan and Abyei to be held on time and to be credible, and for their results to be respected, as agreed on by all sides in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended Sudan's civil war.

"The international community and the [U.N.] Security Council must remain steadfast in support of full implementation of the CPA, including on-time, peaceful referenda, and for the results of the referenda to be respected by all parties," Rice said.

Rice said she and other representatives of the Security Council went to Southern Sudan to emphasize that this is the council's unified position on the January 2010 voting.

In addition, "we sought to assess the status of preparations for the referenda, as well as UNMIS' performance in providing assistance for CPA implementation," she said. UNMIS stands for the United Nations Mission in Sudan.

"We delivered the message that we expect UNMIS to have full and unhindered access, and emphasized the importance of addressing the humanitarian and development challenges facing Southern Sudan, regardless of the outcome of the referenda," Rice said.

The Security Council delegation met with Southern Sudanese President Salva Kiir and other officials, as well as civil society and women leaders, she said.

They also went to a police training center that is preparing a professional civilian police force to provide security for Southern Sudan's referendum.

"These police ... demonstrated procedures for high-risk arrests, VIP protection and crowd control," Rice said. "Impressively, the South started this center from scratch, which demonstrated its commitment to institution building. There are now 5,400 new recruits, more than 300 of whom are women, with 6,000 more scheduled to begin basic training in November," she reported.

Among Southern Sudanese, "the message we repeatedly heard is that they are strongly committed to the January 9 referenda date, and they are yet concerned that this expectation may not be met. And there is some fear of a resumption of violent conflict," Rice said.

Rice also reported hearing concerns among Southerners over delays in preparing for the referendum in the Abyei region.

State Department Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Philip Crowley told reporters October 14 that talks between Northern and Southern Sudanese on the Abyei vote that broke off earlier in the day in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, will resume October 27.

Crowley said "the parties must make decisions on key issues at the next round of talks," the most important of which is determining who will be permitted to vote in the referendum.

"The parties must reach consensus ... if they're going to meet their commitment for the referendum to take place as scheduled," he said, adding that despite the challenge, the parties have committed to hold both referendums on January 9, 2011.

The United States "continue[s] to believe that the parties should come together and fulfill their commitment," Crowley said.

Counterfeit Drugs Pose Dangers in 90 Countries Worldwide

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — Counterfeit medicines are a serious problem afflicting some 90 countries worldwide, and they kill an estimated 700,000 people annually. The key to fighting the "pandemic" of counterfeit drugs is building partnerships among drug companies, pharmaceutical trade groups, law enforcement and customs officials worldwide.

This was the message from the 2010 U.S.-Africa Private Sector Health Conference, organized by the Corporate Council on Africa, on October 6 in Washington.

Rubie Mages, the director of strategic planning for global

security at the U.S. drug manufacturer Pfizer, told the conference that since 2004 her company alone has seized more than 62 million doses of counterfeit medicines worldwide, before those medications could be passed off to consumers by unscrupulous pharmacies and retailers.

INEFFECTIVE AND TOXIC COMPONENTS IN FAKE DRUGS

Counterfeit drugs, made to resemble real patented and trademarked drugs manufactured by a licensed pharmaceutical company, usually are composed of cornstarch and other, often toxic materials. These counterfeits are often harmful to consumers. At best, they have little or no medicinal value; at worst they are dangerous. In 2008, for example, adulterated heparin caused injury and some deaths in patients throughout the world.

Mages said the World Health Organization has estimated that between 8 percent and 10 percent of the world pharmaceutical market is made up of counterfeit drugs. In some cases in Asia, Africa and Latin America, counterfeit drugs amount to 10 percent to 30 percent of those markets. She cited estimates of the international counterfeit global drug market at \$75 billion. Some estimate a 13 percent annual growth rate in fake drugs, outpacing the annual growth rate for legitimate pharmaceuticals by almost twofold.

Focusing on Africa, Mages said her company has seen counterfeit drugs in Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. Mages singled out Nigeria for taking the lead in combating the onslaught of counterfeit drugs.

She said counterfeit drugs are often found to contain harmful levels of pesticide, rat poison, paint and ink (for coloring), and tablets are often given a sheen with common floor wax to resemble the legitimate product.

Mages told her audience that it can be “virtually impossible” to tell real drugs from counterfeit replicas by looking at the medicine or its packaging.

In fact, she cautioned, counterfeit medicines sometimes bear better defined marks and lettering than the real drugs “because the tools and dyes used to punch out millions and millions of [legitimate] tablets” by the drug companies become worn. The markings on a counterfeit tablet can have a “cleaner, crisper look” because the tools and dyes used by counterfeiters are often used in smaller batches and are therefore less worn.

TRANSSHIPMENT OF COUNTERFEIT DRUGS

Counterfeiting is a crime of “fraud and deceit,” Mages said, and counterfeiters – motivated by pure greed – see

their enterprise as high-profit and low-risk. She said counterfeit drugs are often shipped to their final destinations via a complex route to try to throw off any law enforcement bodies that might be tracking the shipments. “There are instances where tablets going from Mauritius to Seychelles went by way of Paris, obviously not a direct route,” just to throw off authorities.

In another case, she said, counterfeit drugs manufactured in China were secretly shipped to Hong Kong, then to Dubai, then to the United Kingdom and on to the Bahamas – all in an attempt to bypass customs and law enforcement authorities. The shipment was then broken down and packed into small postal envelopes with patients’ names on them and clandestinely shipped back to the United Kingdom. The ultimate recipients in the United States got those counterfeit drugs through the mail from the U.K., thinking that they were legitimate drugs. In reality, the counterfeit drugs had been illicitly transshipped in a way to avoid customs and law enforcement authorities in all countries.

Mages said public-private partnerships are the key to enforcement against counterfeit drugs. The pharmaceutical companies must “monitor the supply chain” and alert authorities when counterfeit drugs are spotted, she said.

Paul Orhii, director-general of Nigeria’s National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control, told the conference that his agency recently seized one air shipment of counterfeit drugs worth \$3 million alone. But he said his country has been able to reduce counterfeit drugs in Nigeria to less than 5 percent of the market by aggressively using new technology.

STOPPING COUNTERFEIT DRUGS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Ashifi Gogo, chief executive officer of Sproxil Corporation, which manufactures counterfeit-proof drug packaging, described how new technology has helped stop counterfeiting.

Gogo said that, when purchasing pharmaceuticals, a consumer can send a free text message containing the serial number of the drug package to the manufacturer. The consumer will get an immediate text back saying either “good” or “fake” from the drug company, he said. The technology not only protects consumers, he said, but also alerts the company immediately if counterfeit supplies are entering the market so it can take prompt action.

Another way to use technology to combat counterfeiters was previewed by Julien Bradley, a director of product management and marketing for Thermo Fisher Scientific.

His company is now manufacturing a handheld scanner that can instantly verify a drug shipment's authenticity by analyzing a tablet's complex chemical spectrum. Unless the entire spectrum checks out, he told his audience, the drug will show as counterfeit on the scanner, even if it contains some of the properties found in the authentic drug. He said some 700,000 people die worldwide annually from counterfeit drugs.

In an address to the Partnership for Safe Medicines Interchange October 8, U.S. Food and Drug Commissioner Margaret A. Hamburg warned, "Drug counterfeiting involves larceny and fraud on several levels. Certainly, it involves theft against the drug manufacturer, but perhaps even more importantly, it robs ... people of the faith and confidence they deserve to have in drug products they believe are FDA-approved."

Hamburg told her audience, "Fake medical products may contain too much, too little or the wrong active ingredient, and could contain toxic ingredients. They can also increase the likelihood of drug resistance, and they may prevent patients from getting the real medical products that they need to alleviate suffering and save lives."

RELATED CRIMES

She warned that "counterfeits, diversions and cargo theft are all part of a growing criminal enterprise, which also includes the deliberate adulteration of drugs and consumer products to maximize profits and unknown threats that have yet to surface."

The United States, Hamburg told her audience, is "working hard with its sister regulatory authorities around the world" on a bilateral and multilateral basis, with international and national organizations – such as the World Health Organization and the Permanent Forum on International Pharmaceutical Crime – and with industry to leverage international resources to combat counterfeits.

"We have seen that the threat from economically motivated adulteration, counterfeiting and cargo theft is real. And, unfortunately, we know that the results can be tragic," she said.

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