

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## Secretary Clinton Backs International Probe on Burma Human Rights

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton expressed U.S. support for an international inquiry into human rights abuses that have been committed by Burma's ruling military junta, and pledged that the United States would stand with Asian leaders and individuals who are willing to take action to improve the lives of everyday citizens.

Clinton spoke October 28 in Hawaii at the beginning of a 13-day visit to the Asia-Pacific region at an event sponsored by the East-West Center. The center was established in 1960 by the U.S. Congress to promote better relations and understanding among the United States and countries in the Asia-Pacific region through study, research and dialogue.

The United States is committed to "seek accountability for the human rights violations that have occurred in Burma by working to establish an international commission of inquiry through close consultation with our friends, allies and other partners at the United Nations," Clinton said.

The statement makes Clinton the first U.S. official to publicly call for a U.N. inquiry.

The secretary also said Burma's planned November 7 election will be "deeply flawed" and added that "democracy is more than elections."

"We will make clear to Burma's leaders, old and new alike, they must break from the policies of the past," she said.

Clinton also said the imprisonment of Burma's pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been repeatedly placed under arrest by the country's military leaders since her party's victory in the country's 1988 elections, "must come to an end."

In response to reports that the government is willing to release Suu Kyi after the country's election, Assistant Secretary of State Philip Crowley told reporters in Washington October 28 that the junta was engaging in "a craven manipulation," since Suu Kyi and other pro-democracy leaders should already be free and allowed to participate fully in the electoral process.

"How convenient that they're hinting that she might be released after an election that is unlikely to be fair, free or credible," Crowley said.

"Burma knows what it has to do. It has to open up its political space ... for Aung San Suu Kyi and others to participate fully in the politics of Burma. It has to release its political prisoners, all of them. And it has to have meaningful dialogue with all elements of Burmese society," she said.

In her remarks, Secretary Clinton said she is saddened that Asia "remains the only place in the world where three iconic Nobel laureates — Aung San Suu Kyi, the Dalai Lama and Liu Xiaobo are either in house arrest, in prison or in exile."

The United States is aware that it cannot impose its values on others, Clinton said, but some values are universal and intrinsic to countries that are stable, peaceful and prosperous. The human rights issue is one of several on which the Obama administration is engaging Asian countries, she said, and the United States will have a comprehensive approach to the region. "We will listen, we will cooperate, and we will lead," Clinton said.

"Asia can count on us to stand with leaders and people who take actions that will build a better future ... [and] improve the lives of everyday citizens," she said, calling on leaders to "not just grow an economy, but transform a country."

Under the Obama administration, the United States has "quickened the pace and widened the scope" of its engagement with the Asia-Pacific region and believes the region "will see the most transformative economic growth on the planet" in the 21st century, Clinton said.

"Most of its cities will become global centers of commerce and culture, and as more people across the region gain access to education and opportunity, we will see the rise of the next generation of global leaders in business and science, technology, politics and the arts," she said.

She cited increased U.S. engagement with regional institutions such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), and said, "If consequential security, political and economic issues are being discussed and if they involve our interest, then we will seek a seat at the table."

Clinton also announced that the U.S. Agency for International Development will be returning to the Pacific region in 2011 by opening an office in Fiji "with a fund of \$21 million to support climate change mitigation."

She said Asia wants the United States to continue as "an optimistic, engaged, open and creative partner in the region's flourishing trade and financial interactions," while the United States wants to expand its exports and

investment in the region. Clinton said Americans are “getting our house in order” in the aftermath of the global financial crisis by increasing savings and reforming financial systems.

The United States wants to see a fair balance and is working both multilaterally and bilaterally with countries in the region to “advocate for more open markets, fewer restrictions on exports, more transparency and an overall commitment to fairness,” she said.

### **Secretary Clinton Praises U.S.-Japan Alliance**

By MacKenzie C. Babb  
Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Japanese Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara praised the U.S.-Japan alliance, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

“The partnership between the United States and Japan has endured because it is based on deep friendship between our people, on mutual respect, and on common goals and values,” Clinton said at a joint press conference with Maehara October 27.

The two met in Honolulu on the first day of Clinton’s seven-nation Asia-Pacific tour.

Maehara called the meeting “very fruitful,” and said the two “agreed to further step up Japan-U.S. cooperation on a broad range of issues,” including the implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions regarding Iran.

Clinton praised Japan for imposing sanctions on Iran in September, the latest in a series of blocking moves from the international community aimed at countering Iran’s nuclear ambitions.

“Joining like-minded nations around the world, Japan has emphasized the message that Tehran must meet its international responsibilities,” Clinton said.

She said talks also outlined plans for joint efforts in facing a variety of other global concerns.

Clinton called the bilateral alliance “the cornerstone of American strategic engagement in the Asia-Pacific,” adding the partnership has allowed for cooperation on a range of issues, including nuclear nonproliferation, climate change and combating violent extremism.

She commended the Japanese government for taking steps toward ratifying the Hague Convention on International Parental Child Abduction.

And in response to a recent Chinese restriction on exports

of rare earth minerals, Maehara and Clinton agreed that developing new sources for those materials should become a global priority.

“Because of the importance of these rare earth minerals, I think both the minister and I are aware that our countries and others will have to look for additional sources of supply,” Clinton said.

China supplies about 97 percent of the world’s demand for the minerals, which are critical in emerging clean-energy technologies and in the production of computers and other electronics. Beijing curtailed exports in 2010, slashing quotas to 40 percent below 2009 levels in a move Clinton referred to as a “wake-up call” for other countries to diversify their sourcing of the minerals.

Chinese government officials have said the country is simply protecting its reserves from reckless exploitation, and Premier Wen Jiabao has insisted his country will not use the minerals as a “bargaining chip” or political weapon.

“We welcome the Chinese statement that it will resume normal trading in these materials, but I think the entire world has to seek additional supplies,” Clinton said.

Clinton will continue traveling until November 8, and is scheduled to visit Guam, Vietnam, China’s Hainan Island, Cambodia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Australia and American Samoa. The secretary’s trip overlaps with President Obama’s travel to India, Indonesia, South Korea and Japan November 6–14.

### **Nonstop Reporting and Analysis Affects U.S. Midterm Elections**

By Eric Green  
Special Correspondent

Washington – “Ideological” Internet and cable television news shows running day and night with commentators expressing personal opinions about political candidates could affect the outcome of the November 2 midterm elections, political experts say.

Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia Center for Politics, said that although critics may decry the latest trend toward ideological media, “which only reinforces people’s viewpoints instead of challenging them, the proliferation of new media outlets is positive too.”

In the early days of television in the 1950s, all Americans “got their news from the same few sources,” said Sabato. “Never again will we have that concentration of media power in the hands of so few. The democratization of the news media has not reduced the power of the media in elections, but it certainly has spread it out,” he said.

Sabato said that “not only do the media affect voters’ opinions, but voters’ opinions affect the media. People naturally gravitate towards views like their own and with media options from the left, right and center [of the political spectrum], voters are able to choose where they get their news.”

James Campbell, a political science professor from the University at Buffalo in New York state, offered a different perspective on the new media’s influence. The U.S. public’s “greater access to alternative news outlets on the Internet, cable TV and radio,” he said, “may be undermining the influence” of traditional news media like network television and newspapers.

“My guess is that the traditional news media may be having less of an impact than they had in the past,” said Campbell.

#### NEW MEDIA AND VOTER POLARIZATION

Midterm elections in the United States are held every two years at the midpoint of the four-year presidential term. State gubernatorial and local offices, all 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and 37 of the 100 seats in the U.S. Senate are being contested in 2010. Those contests provide much fodder for political pundits on public airways.

Vanderbilt University (Tennessee) political science professor John Geer said the reality of nonstop news gives the news media a “chance for heightened influence” in these elections.

The public now has a bigger choice in the media it watches, “so liberals might watch the MSNBC television network [considered more liberal] and conservatives might like to listen to talk radio [generally favoring conservatives],” said Geer.

Geer said the “differential pattern suggests the news media are more about reinforcing existing attitudes than changing them. If so, the news media in the 21st century may be another source of polarization” among U.S. citizens.

“We don’t know the effect of the change to ideological media, but we do know that significant segments of the population are drawn to media that share their ideological preferences,” political analyst John Fortier said.

Fortier, a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a policy research group in Washington, said “candidates and campaigns cannot completely avoid traditional media,” but “candidates have many more options for friendly coverage of their views than they did

a decade ago.”

#### PAST IS PROLOGUE

Rutgers University (New Jersey) political science professor Ross Baker said the media’s influence on American politics is “nothing new.”

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, said Baker, “newspapers were practically subsidiaries” of U.S. political parties. “That changed with broadcast television when candidates and parties ran paid advertisements for candidates but were forbidden to have programming that favored one candidate over another.”

Baker said that with cable news, “all restrictions have been removed and some U.S. cable networks feature commentators who are openly partisan, and some of them, like Fox News commentators Bill O’Reilly and Glenn Beck and MSNBC commentator Keith Olbermann, have become enormously influential in shaping public opinion and influencing elections.”

Some Americans, especially those under 30, are said to be forming their political views from a different phenomenon – satirical television news programs such as the *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*.

Marvin Kalb, senior fellow at the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University in Massachusetts and former chief diplomatic correspondent for CBS News and NBC News, agreed that “to the extent that voters get their opinions from Fox and MSNBC, it could be argued that cable television talk shows are showing more political clout this year than before” and that “more clout is more influence.”

But Kalb said other factors may be more important in the 2010 election than the media’s 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week political spin cycle.

“Though we are all fascinated by TV punditry, and watch and absorb it, it is not nearly as important this year” as the state of the American economy, Kalb said. High unemployment in the United States – reported at about 9.6 percent of the population in October – is “infinitely more important” than political opinions offered on television, said Kalb.

#### Conservation Agency Races to Protect U.S. Wildlife

By Karin Rives  
Staff Writer

Washington – All U.S. government agencies are rethinking how they do business as a rapidly warming climate disturbs natural resources, but few may be as focused on these changes as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife

Service.

Charged with protecting and managing animals and sensitive habitats in America's vast wilderness areas, many of the agency's 9,000 employees spent more than 18 months planning and consulting with environmental groups, state wildlife conservation agencies and other outside partners before unveiling an ambitious, long-range climate action plan.

The title of the recently released document — Rising to the Urgent Challenge: Strategic Plan for Responding to Accelerating Climate Change — reflects a growing concern within the Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) that new and bold tactics are needed to help preserve species that may otherwise not make it.

Climate change is already wreaking havoc on wildlife in many areas of the United States, the report shows.

In North Carolina, rising sea levels are pushing salt water into sensitive swamp lands and estuaries such as the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, leading to plant losses on thousands of hectares. Two-thirds of the area's swamps will be lost within a century if the trend continues, FWS staffers report.

In the Rio Grande, the river marking the border between the United States and Mexico, the water is getting warmer due to hotter air temperatures. This threatens the Rio Grande cutthroat, a fish that depends on cool water.

Across the continent in Minnesota near the Canadian border, FWS reports an alarming decline in the moose population. The Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge, once home to as many as 400 moose, now counts fewer than 40. A state study has shown that warmer winter and summer temperatures are causing heat stress in the large animals, making them more prone to parasite-induced, chronic malnutrition.

"Climate change is the driving force for the Fish & Wildlife Service," said Rowan Gould, the agency's acting director. "Climate change is real, climate change is something we all need to deal with, climate change is something we need information on. And remember, we've got to think not five years from, 10 years from now, but what's happening that's going to affect our mission 100 years from now."

#### ACTIONS UNDER WAY

His agency's plan spells out a series of conservation actions for the coming decades. These actions include identifying and cataloguing the nation's most vulnerable species, prioritizing future challenges and actions based on factors such as growing water scarcity, developing a

blueprint that will guide wildlife adaptation work over the next 50 years and establishing a network of landscape conservation cooperatives to improve work in the field.

Many initiatives to help species cope in a changing environment have been under way for some time.

In North Carolina's flat, low-lying coastal areas, for example, FWS has teamed up with the Nature Conservancy, an environmental group, and Duke Energy, an electric power producer, to plant bald cypress, black pine and other native tree species that can resist salt water. Oyster reefs are being built near the shore to reduce wave movements on the shoreline.

In the Rio Grande, FWS researchers are studying the cutthroat trout to find out how the fish handles warmer water temperatures over time. In Washington state, in the Pacific Northwest, the agency worked with the Nisqually Indian tribe to remove a century-old dike, restoring a tidal marsh and helping to increase a dwindling salmon population.

But there may not be much the agency can do for the Minnesota moose, noted Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge Manager Maggie Anderson. "Until the climate factors that are making the moose range shrink are reversed, we will probably see fewer moose in northwest Minnesota," she wrote in the agency's climate change strategy report.

#### COOPERATIVES TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

The cornerstones of FWS' new plan are 21 landscape conservation cooperatives that will soon dot the continent. They will work in tandem with several university-based climate science centers sponsored by the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), the agency that oversees FWS.

Two-thirds of the cooperatives are up and running ahead of schedule after several agencies within the Department of the Interior pooled money and staff to ramp up the effort, said Doug Austen, who's coordinating FWS' national effort to establish these cooperatives.

The DOI climate science centers develop the science needed to understand climate change effects on wildlife and their habitats. The cooperatives consist of state and federal conservationists, nonprofit groups and others charged with implementing solutions on the ground, Austen said.

"The effects of climate change are just so substantial and global — they transcend all of the bureaucratic and geopolitical boundaries that we normally deal with, so we have to address it in a much more collaborative way than

we've ever done in the past," he said. "It's not to say that this type of collaboration doesn't happen already in places, but what this does is extend it nationwide."

### **Robots and Other Wonders Lure American Kids to Science**

By Eric Green  
Special Correspondent

Washington — Robots that kick soccer balls, solar-powered vehicles and helmets that offer virtual bike rides were some of the attractions at America's first national science exposition, the grand finale of two weeks of activities intended to motivate more young people to pursue careers in science.

The expo drew an estimated half million visitors to the National Mall — the grassy expanse between the U.S. Capitol and the Washington Monument — October 23-24, with hundreds of interactive exhibits showing off new technological marvels in science and related fields.

In a related event earlier in the week, President Obama hosted the first White House Science Fair. He stressed the need to increase the participation of America's students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Young people who win science and math competitions deserve the same recognition as members of championship sports teams, Obama said. "In many ways, our future depends on what happens in those contests — when a young person is engaged in conducting an experiment, or writing a piece of software, or solving a hard math problem, or designing a new gadget."

The winners of 15 national youth science and technology competitions were invited to the White House Science Fair. Their projects represent the cutting edge in science, technology and engineering, said Obama, praising their solar-powered cars, water purification systems, robotic wheelchairs and promising new cancer drugs.

The president's "Educate to Innovate" campaign announced last year calls for moving America from the middle to the top in international rankings of math and science education over the next decade and to expand STEM education and career opportunities for underrepresented groups, including women and girls.

"Nothing can prepare you better for success than the education you're receiving in math and science," he said.

#### **ATTRACTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO SCIENCE — WITH ROBOTS**

More than 850 organizations from the public and private

sector helped stage the science expo on the Mall, billed as one of the largest events of its kind ever in the United States. It was the culmination of the USA Science & Engineering Festival launched by entrepreneur Larry Bock — who modeled it on science fairs he had seen in Europe — in partnership with the Lockheed Martin Corporation. The festival, which started October 10, included 75 satellite events, contests and exhibits across the country.

At the exhibits on the Mall, visitors could test their knowledge of chemistry, chat with humanoid robots, watch a robot play soccer (what most of the world calls football), handle a rocket engine and learn about the science behind human expression, race cars, spacecraft, satellites and much more.

An exhibit set up by secondary students in Alexandria, Virginia, showed visitors a replica of a 400-year-old telescope used by Italian astronomer and physicist Galileo Galilei to examine the nighttime sky. Student Daniel Hothem said the school's astronomy club is reaching out to elementary school children to spur their interest in science and math. Hothem said his own interest in science derives from wondering "what makes things work."

Sophia Gershman, a physics teacher at a Warren, New Jersey, high school, helped set up her school's exhibit of a robotics simulation used to teach the theory of elevator programming and motion. Positive feedback can bring more young people into science, she said. "Kids are like plants — they ought to be watered and grown carefully, and they should be able to grow whichever way they want. If they're interested in science, we try to foster that interest and give them that opportunity to grow. If not science, they'll be interested in something else. People who say young people are apathetic are wrong. I don't believe in that, there's no such thing."

Lalaram Guyadin demonstrated his Washington school's exhibit of a go-cart (a small, low, motorized vehicle) powered by solar energy. Guyadin said his dream is to become an electrical engineer at the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration or for private industry, which, he said, will mean a lot of hard work. But he likened himself to an athlete striving to become a champion, and said the result will be worth the effort. Guyadin said he intends to study electrical engineering at Georgia Tech University and to someday offer the world his own scientific invention.

Robyn Needel, a mentor for a high school robotics team based at Gwynn Oak, Maryland, called the "Technowarriors," said advising students at her school on building a robot that plays soccer was an "insidious way to get kids interested in science" — what she termed "sports of the mind."

“Once kids get hands-on experience working on such projects as building robots, they become unbelievably excited about science, engineering and technology,” said Needel.

The school’s exhibit at the expo of the soccer-playing robot attracted a large crowd, many of them young children – perhaps future scientists – who gazed in wonderment as the robot kicked the ball.

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