

American

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President Obama's Trip Underscores Asia's Importance

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Senior White House officials say President Obama's nine-day visit to India, Indonesia, South Korea and Japan is aimed at renewing U.S. engagement across Asia through established alliances and deepening partnerships with emerging powers.

The president's November 6-14 visit includes meetings of the Group of 20 (G20) major economies in Seoul and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) in Yokohama.

In a White House briefing October 28, Ben Rhodes, deputy national security adviser for strategic communications, said Obama's visit to the four countries "sends a strong signal of the ability of democracy to thrive within Asia and the ability of robust economic development to take place within emerging democracies as well as established ones."

The rise of economic growth in Asia "is one of the defining stories of our time," and the region will be a major focus for U.S. exports and job-creation efforts in the future, Rhodes said.

Asia is at the center of U.S. foreign policy because it's fundamental to the economic prosperity of Americans through the need to balance global growth through U.S. exports, and it's fundamental to U.S. security in terms of curbing the spread of nuclear weapons and terrorism, Rhodes said.

The president's meetings with the G20 and APEC also reflect his stress on the value of multilateral institutions in the region and as a central component of U.S. foreign policymaking, according to Jeff Bader, the White House senior director for Asian affairs.

Obama's visit to Indonesia has been eagerly anticipated because he lived there as a child. Bader said although Obama's experience there "makes him an enormously popular figure in Indonesia," the country also has been of growing importance to his administration. Indonesia's population makes it the largest Muslim-majority country and democracy in the world. The country is also now a member of the G20 and is "the most important country" in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), he said.

While in Jakarta, the president plans to announce increased U.S. educational assistance to Indonesia, as well as a substantial five-year program to cooperate against

climate change, Bader said.

Rhodes said Obama will also deliver a speech to the Indonesian people to discuss their partnership with the United States, U.S. outreach to Muslim communities around the world, and Indonesia's pluralism and tolerance.

During his trip, Obama will hold one-on-one meetings with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Chinese President Hu Jintao.

Bader said the president and the Chinese leader will "undoubtedly talk about economic issues," such as the recovery from the global financial crisis, trade and intellectual property rights. He also said security and political topics like Iran, North Korea, Sudan and human rights will likely be part of the meeting agenda.

"We're seeking the mantra of a positive, cooperative, constructive relationship," Bader said.

The United States also wants to assure that China's rise contributes to rather than detracts from Asian stability, and the president's meetings with other Asian leaders will help to strengthen their relationships with the United States and promote the goal of regional stability, Bader said.

Secretary Clinton to Stress U.S. Ties with Asia-Pacific in Vietnam

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton is in Hanoi, Vietnam, to meet with national leaders and to attend the East Asia Summit, emphasizing the U.S. commitment to strengthened engagement with Vietnam and the Asia-Pacific region.

This is Clinton's second visit to the country in less than 100 days, a return that "underscores the U.S. commitment to sustained engagement in the region and reaffirms our interest in broadening and deepening our relationship with Vietnam, an increasingly close partner and emerging regional leader," according to a State Department fact sheet.

The secretary is set to discuss cooperation in security, nuclear nonproliferation, the environment, health, education and trade during talks with Vietnamese leaders. She also plans to address issues regarding human rights, religious freedom and political reform in Vietnam.

"This progress underscores how far the U.S.-Vietnam relations have come" since diplomatic ties were

established in 1995, according to the State Department. The fact sheet highlighted an expansion in two-way trade, advances in security ties and an increase in the number of Vietnamese students studying in America during the past 15 years.

On October 30, the secretary is scheduled to meet with leaders participating in the East Asia Summit to discuss regional political and security issues, the latest in a series of efforts led by President Obama to increase engagement with emerging Asia-Pacific institutions. The East Asia Summit is being held by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) along with six other nations from around the region. As a guest of the chairman, Clinton will address the gathering.

ASEAN members are Indonesia, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Burma.

In July, Clinton participated in the ASEAN Regional Forum. Obama hosted a meeting of ASEAN and U.S. leaders in New York in September during the opening of the new session of the United Nations, and the United States will host the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in 2011 in Hawaii.

After bilateral talks, Clinton will meet with her counterparts from Vietnam, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia to discuss regional cooperation on issues such as health, the environment, education and infrastructure.

Clinton's travel, which began with a meeting with Japan's foreign minister in Hawaii, is scheduled to continue through November 8. She has already visited Guam and Vietnam, and is scheduled to travel to 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.

State Department's Program Welcomes Foreign Journalists

By Sally Rountree
Staff Writer

Washington — The State Department welcomed more than 150 young international media professionals representing 125 countries to the nation's capital as part of the fifth annual Edward R. Murrow Program for Journalists that lasts from October 25 to November 12.

The program, named for one of American journalism's greatest figures, provides foreign journalists the opportunity to experience the United States firsthand while exchanging ideas with their American colleagues. The journalists participate in nine separate projects during

the three-week program. They explore the role of a free press in a democracy, learn about the media and the social, economic and political structures of the United States and engage in professional development seminars and an international symposium with their peers.

"We believe that a free press and the practice of journalism are critical elements for any successful society," Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Judith A. McHale told the group. "These elements cannot exist without you, the individual journalists who have the skills, resources and most of all the commitment to provide your audience with the news they deserve and require."

More than 600 journalists have participated in the program since it began in 2006. For most of them, it was their first visit to the United States.

"I think the world knows more about America than America knows about the world," Anton Aleksejev, a Russian-language correspondent for Estonian Public Broadcasting and a 2010 Murrow journalist, told *America.gov*. "I did not have any strong impressions of Washington. I was like a blank sheet of paper. I was ready to accept whatever the city would write on it."

The program gives foreign journalists the opportunity to compare their preconceived ideas of America with the reality they discover. It also allows Americans to better understand the culture of the visitors and their perspective toward the United States.

This year, for the first time, the Murrow journalists have the unique opportunity to see American democracy in action during the November 2 midterm elections. They will interact with working American journalists and witness election coverage in the U.S. media. As Aida Kasmalieva, a television producer from the Kyrgyz Republic, told *America.gov*, "It will be interesting to talk to the average American voter. What is his reasoning? How does he vote? It will be interesting to see how American TV will cover the elections."

The Murrow Program, a public-private partnership, was developed by the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs as part of its International Visitor Leadership Program, together with the Aspen Institute and leading American schools of journalism.

Murrow, a pioneer in broadcast journalism, is renowned for his radio reports from London rooftops during the Blitz bombings of World War II, including his famous sign-off to courageous Londoners, "Good night and good luck." His career became synonymous with investigative television journalism through his innovative *See It Now*

television program and coverage of some of America's most difficult social issues – hunger, poverty and McCarthyism – of the 1950s. Following his successful journalism career, he became the director of the U.S. Information Agency under President John F. Kennedy. He was a firm believer in the importance of international engagement and understanding.

Continuing in the Murrow tradition, the journalists visited the U.S. State Department for the Aspen Institute Symposium on Current Issues in Journalism, featuring an address by Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William J. Burns; a conversation with Bob Woodward of the *Washington Post*; and a panel discussion with leading journalists and representatives of new media, including Arianna Huffington, editor of the online political journal *Huffington Post*. Participants also attended lectures on the midterm elections, briefings on Capitol Hill and meetings with foreign policy analysts at local universities and policy research organizations.

The participants will divide into smaller groups to visit 10 journalism schools, located throughout the United States, for intensive seminars on journalistic practices in a democratic society. They will also experience life on American college campuses and interact with journalism students.

During their last week in America, the participants will visit cities including Austin, Texas; Pensacola, Florida; Charleston, South Carolina; and Portland, Oregon, to get acquainted with grass-roots civic and political life in the United States. Before their return home they will reunite in New York City to meet with representatives of major media outlets and visit the U.S. mission to the United Nations.

United States Steps Up Efforts to End Modern-Day Slavery

By Jane A. Morse
Staff Writer

Washington – The United States will intensify its efforts to combat human trafficking, says U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.

At a special event October 29 at the Department of Justice (DOJ) to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, Holder said DOJ will strengthen the ability of federal law enforcement to investigate and prosecute human trafficking crimes. This includes improving collaboration among prosecutors in the field.

“We are going to ensure that every human trafficking investigation and prosecution has access to the most sophisticated expertise that the Department of Justice has

at its disposal,” Holder said.

In addition, DOJ will launch pilot interagency teams in select judicial districts to focus on bringing traffickers to justice. This streamlined interagency effort, Holder said, “will allow us to more effectively target our enforcement efforts at the most serious human trafficking threats, and develop high-impact investigations and prosecutions.”

DOJ partners with the departments of Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, State, Defense and Labor in combating human trafficking, a crime that has become a billion-dollar-a-year business.

During his term in office, President Bill Clinton, recognizing that human slavery was far from a dead institution, signed into law the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) on October 28, 2000. TVPA not only greatly extended the reach of criminal anti-trafficking statutes, it also established an array of victim protections, prevention programs, and policy and coordination mechanisms that spurred a coordinated, interdisciplinary response.

Lanny Breuer, assistant attorney general for the Criminal Division at DOJ, said that in many human trafficking cases, it is vulnerable nations that are being exploited. Breuer said extensive international efforts are critical, both in conducting investigations and building the capacity of governments to fight trafficking.

According to Thomas Perez, assistant attorney general for the Civil Rights Division at DOJ, the TVPA allowed DOJ to dramatically increase prosecutions over the years to a record 52 cases charged in just the past fiscal year.

“We’re not just bringing more cases,” Perez said. “We’re bringing cases of unprecedented scope and impact, taking on international organized criminal networks. ... Human trafficking is becoming similar to drug trafficking and gun trafficking in that it frequently involves complex cartels of organized crime.”

Thanks to the TVPA, Perez said, thousands of human lives have been restored to freedom and hundreds of traffickers prosecuted and their criminal networks dismantled.

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