

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

November 2, 2010

Presidential Proclamation on Native American Heritage Month.....	1
United States Committed to East Asia Summit.....	1
U.S. Allies, Good Security Helped Prevent Cargo Bomb Attacks.....	2
Anti-Corruption Fighters of the World: Unite, U.S. Urges.....	3
Author Connects Islam to Environmental Preservation.....	4

Presidential Proclamation on Native American Heritage Month

The White House
Office of the Press Secretary
October 29, 2010

Presidential Proclamation--National Native American Heritage Month

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

For millennia before Europeans settled in North America, the indigenous peoples of this continent flourished with vibrant cultures and were the original stewards of the land. From generation to generation, they handed down invaluable cultural knowledge and rich traditions, which continue to thrive in Native American communities across our country today. During National Native American Heritage Month, we honor and celebrate their importance to our great Nation and our world.

America's journey has been marked both by bright times of progress and dark moments of injustice for American Indians and Alaska Natives. Since the birth of America, they have contributed immeasurably to our country and our heritage, distinguishing themselves as scholars, artists, entrepreneurs, and leaders in all aspects of our society. Native Americans have also served in the United States Armed Forces with honor and distinction, defending the security of our Nation with their lives. Yet, our tribal communities face stark realities, including disproportionately high rates of poverty, unemployment, crime, and disease. These disparities are unacceptable, and we must acknowledge both our history and our current challenges if we are to ensure that all of our children have an equal opportunity to pursue the American dream. From upholding the tribal sovereignty recognized and reaffirmed in our Constitution and laws to strengthening our unique nation-to-nation relationship, my Administration stands firm in fulfilling our Nation's commitments.

Over the past 2 years, we have made important steps towards working as partners with Native Americans to build sustainable and healthy native communities. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act continues to impact the lives of American Indians and Alaska Natives, including through important projects to improve, rebuild, and renovate schools so our children can get the education and skills they will need to compete in the global economy. At last year's White House Tribal

Nations Conference, I also announced a new consultation process to improve communication and coordination between the Federal Government and tribal governments.

This year, I was proud to sign the landmark Affordable Care Act, which permanently reauthorized the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, a cornerstone of health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives. This vital legislation will help modernize the Indian health care system and improve health care for 1.9 million American Indians and Alaska Natives. To combat the high rates of crime and sexual violence in Native communities, I signed the Tribal Law and Order Act in July to bolster tribal law enforcement and enhance their abilities to prosecute and fight crime more effectively. And, recently, my Administration reached a settlement in a lawsuit brought by Native American farmers against the United States Department of Agriculture that underscores our commitment to treat all our citizens fairly.

As we celebrate the contributions and heritage of Native Americans during this month, we also recommit to supporting tribal self-determination, security, and prosperity for all Native Americans. While we cannot erase the scourges or broken promises of our past, we will move ahead together in writing a new, brighter chapter in our joint history.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 2010 as National Native American Heritage Month. I call upon all Americans to commemorate this month with appropriate programs and activities, and to celebrate November 26, 2010, as Native American Heritage Day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand ten, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fifth.

BARACK OBAMA

United States Committed to East Asia Summit

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told the East Asia Summit, meeting in Vietnam, that the overarching U.S. goal is to help strengthen and build it and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as key forums for political and strategic issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

"The conversations that take place here are of great consequence for every country in the Asia-Pacific region,

and the United States looks forward to being a part of them," Clinton said October 30 in Hanoi. She is the first secretary of state to attend the East Asia Summit, and it was her sixth trip to the region.

Clinton laid out guiding principles for U.S. engagement with the East Asia Summit during brief remarks. She is meeting with leaders and senior officials from at least eight East Asian and Pacific nations during a 13-day trip to the region to show engagement across a range of issues.

The East Asia Summit (EAS) was held by the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) along with six other nations from around the region — Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea. And for the first time, the United States and Russia were invited.

The United States is making an enduring commitment to the East Asia Summit, Clinton said. President Obama will attend the 2011 Jakarta Summit, and the United States wants to work closely with the EAS on its agenda and initiatives.

As the summit evolves, ASEAN should continue to play a central role and provide its leadership, she said, adding that it can translate dialogue into results that benefit all the members.

"We share ASEAN's vision of EAS as a forum where leaders can have intimate and informal discussions on important political and strategic issues," she told delegates. "We view ASEAN as a fulcrum for the region's emerging regional architecture."

Clinton encouraged the summit to pursue an active agenda that includes many of the most consequential issues facing the region — among them nuclear proliferation, the increase in conventional arms, maritime security, climate change, and promoting shared values and civil society.

The forum should also reinforce the work being done in other forums such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and the ASEAN Defense Ministerial meeting, she added.

Clinton said that as the United States engages with the EAS and other regional institutions, it will continue to leverage the strength of its bilateral relationships, starting with its treaty alliances — Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand and the Philippines — as the foundation of its engagement in the Asia-Pacific region.

U.S. Allies, Good Security Helped Prevent Cargo Bomb Attacks

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration credits the diligence and cooperation of security services from the United States and its partners overseas for identifying and neutralizing two bombs placed aboard cargo jets bound for the United States.

Both bombs originated from Yemen, which is home to the terror group al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). President Obama said October 29 that the plot was a "credible terrorist threat" that counterterrorism professionals are taking very seriously.

AQAP "continues to plan attacks against our homeland, our citizens, and our friends and allies," Obama said, adding that Yemen's president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, had pledged his country's full cooperation in the investigation into the attempted attacks.

"We will continue to strengthen our cooperation with the Yemeni government to disrupt plotting by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and to destroy this al-Qaida affiliate," Obama said. "We'll also continue our efforts to strengthen a more stable, secure and prosperous Yemen so that terrorist groups do not have the time and space they need to plan attacks from within its borders."

According to news reports, explosive devices containing the plastic explosive PETN were placed inside printer toner cartridges in two separate packages that were addressed to synagogues in the U.S. city of Chicago. On October 29, one of the packages was intercepted on a cargo flight in the United Kingdom, and the other onboard a cargo flight in Dubai.

John Brennan, who is President Obama's assistant for homeland security and counterterrorism, told reporters October 29 that al-Qaida and its affiliates have "tried to adapt to all of the obstacles and hurdles we've put in front of it," and said the United States and its allies need to remain "very agile" and "make sure that we stay one step ahead of them."

"They are looking to identify vulnerabilities in our system and take advantage of those vulnerabilities. But fortunately, because of ... the good work of the people here, as well as the very important partnership that we have with our allies overseas, we've been able to stay ahead of them," Brennan said.

Although counterterrorism cooperation with the Yemeni government needs to improve, Brennan said, it is "better than it's ever been before" following a steady

improvement over the past two years.

"We're working very closely with them. And we found that they are courageous partners. Many Yemenis have lost their lives in the battle against al-Qaida," he said.

He also praised the strong cooperation of the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates in the incidents, and in a separate October 29 statement said the United States is also grateful to Saudi Arabia for its "assistance in developing information that helped underscore the imminence of the threat emanating from Yemen."

Brennan told reporters that the United States has built up "a very, very capable and robust intelligence, law enforcement, homeland security system" since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks by al-Qaida.

"As a result of the strength of that system, information became available that we were able to act upon very quickly," he said. "The redundant layers of security, the tremendous work of the counterterrorism professionals, law enforcement, homeland security, intelligence, was the reason why we were able to succeed."

Brennan told NBC Television's Meet the Press October 31 that U.S. officials believe the bomb maker is the same individual who constructed devices used by would-be Nigerian terrorist Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab on a U.S.-bound jet on December 25, 2009, as well as the August 2009 assassination attempt against Saudi intelligence chief Prince Mohammed bin Nayef.

"It's a very sophisticated device in terms of how it was constructed, how it was concealed," he said, and all three incidents "bear very similar types of traits and characteristics."

"The bomb maker in Yemen who is putting these together is a very dangerous individual that we need to find and bring to justice," Brennan said.

John Pistole, who is administrator of the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA), told CBS Television's Early Show November 1 that he had ordered a temporary hold on any packages bound for the United States that originated in Yemen.

"We've also taken steps ... working with the Yemeni authorities, to have a team of TSA experts in Sana'a there at the airport to provide additional screening and training and expertise, with additional equipment, to ensure that any packages that come out of Yemen, once that ban is lifted, will be more secure," he said.

Pistole said that more than 7 billion pounds and millions of pieces of cargo are shipped worldwide every year and

the Obama administration is working with aviation and security personnel from around the world in its efforts to secure items bound for the United States.

State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said November 1 that during the 2010 fiscal year, which ended September 30, the United States provided about \$296 million in security and humanitarian assistance to Yemen. The Obama administration expects to send roughly the same amount in the 2011 fiscal year.

"We will continue to evaluate how we can best support Yemen in its fight against al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, which obviously has a dramatic impact on the United States," Crowley said.

Anti-Corruption Fighters of the World: Unite, U.S. Urges

By Andrzej Zwanecki
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration is pushing for bolder efforts to fight corruption, building on progress made last year by the international community.

An international anti-corruption campaign gained momentum in 2009, when state parties to the U.N. Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) agreed to establish a peer review mechanism for compliance with the convention. In June, a review committee adopted guidelines and selected through a drawing the first countries to undergo review. The United States is among the countries chosen.

U.S. officials want to use the momentum of the convention's implementation to "tie different strands of anti-corruption and anti-organized-crime [measures] into a more forceful international action," according to David M. Luna, director of anti-crime programs at the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

In November, the fight against corruption and organized crime will be on the agendas of the summit of the Group of 20 major economies in Seoul, South Korea; the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders Meeting in Yokohama, Japan; the 14th International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) in Bangkok; and the New Zealand-U.S. Trans-Pacific Symposium on Dismantling Transnational Illicit Networks in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Luna and other officials said they will call for more vigorous enforcement of anti-bribery rules and closer international cooperation in bringing kleptocrats to justice and recovering stolen assets, in promoting good governance and corporate integrity, and in attacking the

nexus between corruption and other types of transnational crime and terrorism.

Countries have powerful international arrangements at their disposal, according to U.S. officials, who cite the UNCAC and the U.N. Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. What governments, businesses and nongovernmental groups now must do is create an atmosphere of mutual trust, break bureaucratic barriers and form private-public partnerships to manage efforts across borders, Luna said.

TRANSPARENCY IN THE POST-CRISIS ERA

The recent financial crisis brought into a sharp focus the question of transparency in the public and private sectors in the United States and other countries.

Transparency enables civil society and the media to oversee government and promote accountability, said Robert Leventhal, the director of anti-corruption programs at the INL. Such oversight can help improve governance and make future crises less likely, he said.

The Obama administration early on decided to lead by example, Leventhal said. It has released detailed information about major government programs, including financial backing for the banking sector and economic stimulus spending. The U.S. government also seeks to be a model subject for the UNCAC review process by inviting experts from other countries to visit the United States, by allowing full involvement of civil society and by publishing the results of the review, all optional requirements of the process.

Transparency International, the main organizer of the International Anti-Corruption Conference, which will be held November 10-13 in Bangkok, said transparency – a large degree of disclosure to make agreements, dealings, practices and transactions open for verification – is essential to curbing corruption in both the public and private sectors. Transparency also helps create the atmosphere of trust necessary for many governments and nongovernmental groups to unite around common goals. That's the message encapsulated in the main theme of this year's conference: "Restoring Trust: Global Action for Transparency."

Mutual transparency will help forge partnerships and build momentum for better governance, said Roberto Perez-Rocha of Transparency International. "The IACC is about bringing people together to strengthen collective action," he said. The conference brings together representatives of many sectors, including government, business, civil society and academia, from across the globe.

At the conference, a U.S. official will lead a workshop on links between corruption and transnational organized crime. Leventhal said the idea behind the workshop has grown from the experience that going it alone against corruption, organized crime and money laundering is not the most efficient way of dealing with these issues.

Efforts to fight illicit activities are likely to be more fruitful, he said, "if you look at the convergence and interplay of these problems."

Author Connects Islam to Environmental Preservation

By M. Scott Bortot
Staff Writer

Washington – For Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, working to protect the environment is a way of life.

The 33-year-old New York City native was recently in Washington to talk about his upcoming book, *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches About Protecting the Planet*.

"Every step through my career, there has been some relationship to what is our relationship to the Earth," Abdul-Matin told *America.gov* at a reading for the book at Busboys and Poets café in Washington.

Abdul-Matin's interest in protecting nature started as a young boy when his father would take the family to visit their ancestral homestead in southern Virginia.

"Growing up in New York City, he would bring us out into the woods. ... He would bring us anywhere we could go so we would have a better relationship with nature," Abdul-Matin said. "His understanding of the natural world was through being connected to the farm on his trips to where our family is from in Virginia. He loved bringing us to nature and that was instilled in me."

With *Green Deen*, Abdul-Matin brings his love of the natural world to the reader. He said the book is written not only with the Muslim reader in mind, but for anyone interested in learning more about Islam's connection to the environment and Islam in general.

After two years in the writing, *Green Deen* is a timely work for a couple of reasons.

"We are re-examining our relationship to water, waste, energy and food, and there is a Muslim ethic that has been in place for generations. ... For example, we are told to eat from the plate that is closest to you, so you don't eat over somebody, so that could be understood to be 'buy local,' get food that is locally grown," Abdul-Matin said.

On another level, the book may help dispel misperceptions of Islam held by many people.

"There is a lot of misunderstandings about Muslim civilization. ... The height of Muslim civilization was very technologically advanced," Abdul-Matin said.

He said his understanding of religion guides his life choices and how he helps others. Calling Islam a "natural religion," Abdul-Matin said the first law of such a religion is self-preservation.

"From that perspective, I want to preserve human beings and the natural world. My being a Muslim is my pathway to doing that," he said.

Shortly after graduating from the University of Rhode Island in 1999, Abdul-Matin worked in Massachusetts for Outward Bound, a nonprofit organization that encourages personal growth through experiences and challenges in the wilderness. He used his love of people and the environment to help at-risk youth develop greater self-understanding.

Outward Bound, it turns out, also had a profound effect on him. One of the creeds the program emphasizes is to leave a place in a better condition than you found it.

"It was that Outward Bound principle that reminded me of my Islamic framework," Abdul-Matin said. "As an Outward Bound instructor ... I started to understand that leaving a place better than you found it also applies to my role as the khalifa, or steward, of the planet Earth."

After returning to New York, he directed youth programs at the Prospect Park Alliance in Brooklyn. While at the alliance, he helped establish the Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment, which today is a secondary school with several hundred students.

In addition to being the author of *Green Deen*, Abdul-Matin writes for numerous publications on the environment and issues important to the Muslim community. In October, he appeared on a CNN panel hosted by Christiane Amanpour to discuss American perceptions of Islam and Muslims.

One of the biggest challenges in writing the book was the editorial process. Fortunately for Abdul-Matin, his wife, Fatima Ashraf, helped make it more reader-friendly while Imam Zaid Shakir of Zaytuna College advised him on the writing process.

Abdul-Matin is humble in describing the possible impact of his first book. He hopes that others, more steeped in environmental science, might be inspired to expand on the ideas presented in *Green Deen*.

"Hopefully this will be a message to some of these scholars who are much more qualified than I am to write

on this topic," he said. "That they can take it and make the definitive book on Islam and the environment."

(Preceding items distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://america.gov>)