

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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North Korea Needs to Hear Unified Condemnation of Attack

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration says China and other countries need to join the United States in sending “a clear, direct, unified message” to North Korea’s leadership that provocations such as the November 23 artillery attack on the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong are “unwarranted, unhelpful and should cease,” according to State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley.

Speaking to reporters in Washington November 24, Crowley said the attack “was a clear, premeditated action by North Korea specifically intended to inflame tensions in the region.”

North Korea violated the 1953 armistice that halted the Korean War and “fired upon a sovereign country [which] resulted in the deaths of military and civilian personnel,” he said. According to press reports, the attack left four dead, including two South Korean civilians, and injured at least 19.

Describing the incident as “a one-off, premeditated act,” Crowley said the United States does not currently believe North Korea is “preparing for an extended military confrontation.”

But the attack comes after several recent North Korean provocations through its nuclear and ballistic missile testing, the March attack on the South Korean ship Cheonan, and recent claims to have centrifuges capable of producing enriched uranium that could be used in nuclear weapons.

The Obama administration recognizes that North Korea may choose to continue taking provocative actions and the United States is “prepared to deal with the choice North Korea makes or continues to make,” Crowley said.

But in the interest of preserving peace and stability in the region, the United States, South Korea, Japan, China, Russia and other countries “have to do everything we can to fundamentally change North Korea’s calculations,” he said.

Crowley said U.S. and Chinese officials “see the situation ... very similarly” and share the same interests.

“We want to see a stable situation in the region. We would like to see an end to these provocations. We would like to see a political decision by North Korea to follow through on its commitments under the 2005 joint

statement,” in which Pyongyang agreed to take verifiable and irreversible steps toward ending its nuclear activities, Crowley said.

Although North Korea is a sovereign country, “China is pivotal to moving North Korea in a fundamentally different direction,” he said. “We would hope and expect China would use that influence first to reduce tensions that have arisen as a result of North Korean provocations and then, secondly, to continue to encourage North Korea to take affirmative steps to denuclearize.”

United States, Russia Build Ties Through University Partnerships

By Sally Rountree
Staff Writer

Washington — Since the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission was formed by Presidents Obama and Medvedev in July 2009, the number of partnerships between American and Russian universities has nearly doubled, building opportunities for mutual understanding, collaboration on shared challenges of the 21st century, and closer ties between the future leaders of both countries. International education and exchange has been the key.

“Diplomacy does not just happen between government officials,” said Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. “It also happens between individuals, through people-to-people connections and student exchanges. These are some of the most important people-to-people connections we can have.”

Programs and exchanges are being instituted at all levels. American law students at Georgetown University and George Washington University participated in a video conference on jury trials with their Russian counterparts at St. Petersburg State University. Six partnerships between Russian and American universities in science and technology, environmental science, and culture and society have been established through the Russian Ministry of Education and Science and the U.S. Department of Education.

A new Fulbright “Science and Innovation” award has been announced, as well as pending partnerships between the New York Academy of Science and Moscow State Science University, and MIT and Russia’s Innovation Center at Skolkovo. And, in possibly one of the most ambitious partnerships, the Moscow Architectural Institute and Columbia University plan a joint program to establish a World Architecture Center.

“Active engagement between U.S. and international students in American classrooms provides students with valuable skills that will enable them to collaborate across

cultures and borders to address shared global challenges in the years ahead," said Allan Goodman, president and chief executive of the Institute of International Education (IIE).

According to IIE's annual report, Open Doors, 671,616 international students from 200 countries studied in the United States in 2008–2009, while 260,327 Americans studied abroad. For every American that studied in Russia, three Russian students came to the United States.

To increase the number and diversity of American students studying in Russia, the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs offers programs such as the Gilman, Fulbright and Boren scholarships.

"When foreign students sit side by side with American students in classrooms around the world, they exchange new ideas, challenge old stereotypes, and gain immeasurable knowledge from and about each other," said Janice Jacobs, assistant secretary of state for consular affairs.

Despite the global economic downturn, "the U.S. continues to be a preferred destination for Russian students," according to Ann Merrill, the Moscow regional director of EducationUSA, a network of student advising centers offering information about study in the United States. For the past decade, an average of 5,000 Russians each year have chosen to pursue their undergraduate or graduate study in America. In 2009–2010, the number of Russians studying in the United States declined slightly, reflecting a drop in the Russian birthrate, but the overall numbers have remained fairly stable.

For graduate study, Russians most often enrolled in Columbia University, the University of Southern California, the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities, Stanford University or Harvard University, according to Open Doors. For undergraduate study, Russians chose the University of Alaska–Anchorage, City University of New York–Kingsborough Community College, Northern Virginia Community College, City University of New York–Brooklyn College, Montgomery College (near Washington), and Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania.

Community colleges are increasingly popular with Russian students, with nearly a third choosing this two-year, low-cost option. In the United States, community colleges are public schools open to all applicants and offering a wide range of credit courses leading to an associate's degree after a two-year course of study. Students may then transfer to a four-year college or university and apply these credits toward a bachelor's degree.

"The Russians seem very interested in the prospect of open admissions," said Bradley Gorski, Russia country coordinator for EducationUSA. "They also like the idea of being able to transfer to a four-year university or change the course of their studies." Gorski cited the case of a Russian who had finished an undergraduate degree in electrical engineering but wanted to study graphic design. "Community colleges are some of the only places where he might fit in."

Recognizing their importance, the Fulbright Program in Russia in April 2010 invited six American community college administrators to visit leading Russian universities and colleges. As a result, representatives from Northern Virginia Community College and Ivanovo State Power Engineering University in Russia recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate on geographic information systems and geospatial technologies.

Through the efforts of the State Department and the Bilateral Presidential Commission, similar new institutional relationships are being formed, as well as events designed to encourage international education and exchange.

In November, the annual International Education Week sponsored by the U.S. departments of State and Education featured presentations on American culture, the English language and college throughout Russia, from St. Petersburg to Siberia. Lectures and video conferences explaining educational opportunities and the benefits of study in the United States were held in Novosibirsk, Vladimir, Vladivostok and Rostov-on-Don.

At a college fair in Moscow, representatives from 14 American colleges and universities drew 1,500 visitors seeking academic opportunities in the United States.

"U.S. universities and colleges enjoy preeminence throughout the world and our campuses flourish in a climate of international exchange," Assistant Secretary Jacobs said. "American students overseas and foreign students in the United States contribute greatly to global awareness and mutual understanding, and our country and our world are richer for it."

Governments, Activists Elevate Fight Against Corruption

By Andrzej S Zwanecki
Staff Writer

Washington — Officials attending major international gatherings have vowed to turn anti-corruption commitments into action as the stakes in the global fight against bribery, graft and embezzlement have grown greater.

The Group of 20 (G20) major economies at the November leaders' meeting in Seoul, South Korea, endorsed an anti-corruption action plan, which calls for effective implementation of the U.N. Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), enforcement of laws against foreign bribery and other efforts.

Governments have made much progress against corruption by adopting international conventions, by passing national laws and by establishing anti-corruption bodies. But in Seoul a broad and representative group of nations decided to intensify the fight through peer pressure and other means, said anti-corruption activists gathered in Bangkok at the November International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC), which coincided with the G20 summit.

They welcomed the G20 plan as a major advance and "a significant response to today's crisis." The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation ministerial meeting, which ran parallel to the G20 summit, came up with its own commitment to collective action against corruption and illicit trade.

WHERE CORRUPTION THRIVES

With the advance of globalization, corruption has "infected" public life, business and the international arena more than ever. The overall effects are hampered economic development, weakened democratic institutions and a growing culture of impunity. Together, they erode public trust in governments.

Some of the greatest risks of bribery and graft are still linked to development assistance worth billions of dollars a year and multinational corporations' business dealings worth many times more, according to experts.

But multinational development banks, with the World Bank in the lead, have made great strides in recent years to clean up their practices by debarring private-sector contractors found guilty of bribery related to bank projects. Earlier in 2010, the World Bank and four other development banks launched a "cross-debarment initiative," under which a contractor blacklisted by one of the banks can be sanctioned by the others.

But the war on corruption in development projects is far from being won, according to experts. In Bangkok, climate change mitigation schemes and aid for post-conflict countries were discussed as new areas of concern.

Multinational corporations, which used to treat bribing government officials to secure contracts as normal business, now are more cautious, according to experts. Under pressure, some multinationals adopted compliance and oversight programs, and Siemens AG, which just a

few years ago was sanctioned for its role in a worldwide bribery scandal, is joining forces with its competitors to watch each other's quests for business contracts, according to the company's general counsel, Peter Solmssen.

The United States, Germany and Italy have pursued aggressive tactics against corporate bribery as outlined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's anti-bribery rules and mandated by national laws. With a strong anti-bribery law pending, the United Kingdom may soon join their ranks. But other countries, and their multinational companies, have been reluctant to enforce the OECD rules. China and other emerging markets are not even part of the OECD anti-bribery convention.

At the national level, too-cozy relations between government officials and major businesses create corruption potential, anti-corruption activists say. In Thailand during the IACC, the government pledged to work together with a group of leading companies to address corruption, particularly in public procurement. But such a partnership has yet to prove its worth, as in many countries the two sides blame each other for corruption, said an anti-corruption activist who did not want to be identified.

PUSH FOR TRANSPARENCY

While multinational corporations are under increasing scrutiny, government officials in some developing countries have yet to feel the brunt of public oversight.

Some officials have used opaque budget processes and restricted access to government data to transfer illicit money to tax havens and Western countries. Organized crime – facilitated by corruption – has penetrated legal economies, expanding the potential for corruption in places where it formerly had not been a major problem.

Proceeds from crime, tax evasion and corruption worth a trillion dollars are transferred each year from developing to developed countries, according to Global Financial Integrity, a nongovernmental group.

The World Bank, the United States and other countries have worked to track, seize and return assets stolen by kleptocrats. But Global Witness, which advertised its campaigns in Bangkok, and other groups are putting pressure on Western countries to do more. Global Witness has been publishing damning reports on the complicity in corruption of nations' financial, real estate and other sectors in countries such as Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea.

Most anti-corruption groups believe that corruption and

kleptocracy must be addressed first and foremost at the source. That is why calls for budget transparency and government accountability, particularly in resource-rich countries, were heard in Bangkok more often than any other demands.

International coalitions and partnerships — such as the International Budget Partnership, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and Publish What You Pay campaign — have succeeded in getting some developing countries to shed more light on government data. But more needs to be done to ensure that petroleum, gas and other government revenues fund development projects rather than enriching individuals or groups in power, said Peter Eigen, chair of the EITI.

His and other anti-corruption groups believe that the U.S. financial reform law will give a powerful boost to their cause. A key provision of the law requires all U.S.-listed oil, gas and mining companies to publish revenue payments, country by country. When the provision enters into force in 2011, it will cover most of the world's largest oil and mining companies.

Terrorist Designation of Falah-i-Insaniat Foundation

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
November 24, 2010

MEDIA NOTE

Secretary of State's Terrorist Designation of Falah-i-Insaniat Foundation

On November 24, 2010 the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury and the U.S. Attorney-General, has amended the designation of Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) and Executive Order (E.O.) 13224 by adding Falah-i-Insaniat Foundation (FIF) as an alias of LeT. Today, the Department of the Treasury also designated LeT senior leader and current head of FIF, Hafiz Abdur Rauf, Mian Abdullah, the head of LeT's Traders Department, and Mohammad Naushad Alam Khan, a key financial facilitator for LeT, as Specially Designated Global Terrorists under E.O. 13224. These actions will help stem the flow of finances to LeT through FIF and provide the Department of Justice with a critical tool to prosecute those who knowingly provide material support to LeT and its senior leaders.

FIF is a Pakistan-based organization that is closely connected to banned terrorist group LeT and its humanitarian front Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JUD). LeT has claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist acts against Pakistani, Indian and U.S. interests and is responsible for

the horrific November 2008 Mumbai attacks. The United Nations and Government of Pakistan have already banned JUD, through which LeT seeks to raise money for terrorist activities. In essence, FIF is JUD with a new name, designed to evade scrutiny and sanctions.

The various actions taken today against FIF support the U.S. effort to degrade the capabilities of LeT. We are determined to eliminate LeT's ability to carry out terrorist attacks and to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat its networks. The Department of State's Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, said "Today's amendment of the LeT designation to include FIF shows that the United States will not tolerate any support to this organization. LeT has attempted to use FIF as a way to evade scrutiny. This designation will help put to an end that attempted evasion."

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