

American

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North Korean Actions Prompt U.S., South Korean, Japanese Unity

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Japanese Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara and South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan jointly declared that recent North Korean actions have jeopardized peace and stability in Asia and said Pyongyang's "provocative and belligerent behavior ... will be met with solidarity from all three countries."

In remarks after their meeting in Washington December 6, Clinton said North Korea's November 23 attack upon the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong violated the 1953 armistice that halted armed conflict on the Korean Peninsula, and its announcement that it has centrifuges capable of enriching uranium violates U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874.

Clinton said the Six-Party Talks, involving North Korea, South Korea, China, Russia, Japan and the United States, "cannot substitute for action by North Korea to comply with its obligations."

She expressed appreciation for China's initiative to propose an emergency session of discussions, but said, "we first need an appropriate basis" for their resumption. "Any effort, of course, must start with North Korea ceasing all provocative and belligerent behavior," she said.

"They need to demonstrate a seriousness of purpose in ending their provocations and let the world know they are now ready to come to the table and fulfill the commitments that they have already made," she said, including their 2005 pledge to take verifiable and irreversible steps to end North Korean nuclear programs.

The United States, Japan and South Korea continue to be in close coordination with China and Russia, and Clinton said she has told her Chinese counterparts that China "has a special role to play in helping to shape North Korea's behavior."

"We would hope that China would work with us to send a clear, unmistakable message to North Korea that they have to demonstrate a seriousness of purpose in ending their provocative actions," she said, adding that there are "many ways" for North Korea to do that.

Foreign Minister Kim urged China to give clearer warnings to North Korea over its actions. "These provocations are not at all helping the security of the region and the peninsula, so we would like China to play

a more important role," he said.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) announced December 6 that it has opened a preliminary examination into North Korea's shelling of Yeonpyeong Island and the March 26 sinking of the South Korean warship Cheonan.

According to a statement from the ICC's Office of the Prosecutor, the examination will evaluate whether either or both incidents "constitute war crimes under the jurisdiction of the Court."

The ICC "has jurisdiction over war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide possibly committed on the territory of the Republic of Korea or by its nationals" since February 1, 2003, when the Rome Statute entered into force in South Korea. Seoul signed the statute in 2002.

"The Office of the Prosecutor is mandated by the Statute to conduct preliminary examinations for the purpose of determining if the Rome Statute criteria for opening an investigation are met," the ICC statement said.

New Trade Agreement Will Help South Korea Grow Its Economy

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The proposed U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement helps the United States balance its economy with greater exports and also helps South Korea foster economic growth, President Obama says.

Obama said South Korea will gain greater access to U.S. markets and also make American products more affordable for Korean households and businesses. U.S. and South Korean trade negotiators wrapped up four days of trade talks December 3 on a bilateral free-trade agreement held up by differences over beef and auto imports.

Negotiators met in Maryland and returned to their capitals to brief Obama and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak on details of the revised trade pact. An announcement of the details in the revision was made late December 3 at the White House.

"I am very pleased that the United States and South Korea have reached agreement on a landmark trade deal that is expected to increase annual exports of American goods by up to \$11 billion and support at least 70,000 American jobs," Obama said in a White House statement.

At the same time the agreement, which is the largest of its kind since the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement, will boost the South Korean gross domestic product by approximately 0.6 percent over 10 years and

help create hundreds of thousands of new jobs in the service sector, manufacturing and agriculture, according to published Korean news reports.

“Today is also a win for the strong alliance between the United States and South Korea, which for decades has ensured that the security that has maintained stability on the [Korean] peninsula continues,” Obama said. “And it’s also allowed South Korea its extraordinary rise from poverty to prosperity.”

Obama thanked President Lee for his commitment to a successful outcome of the negotiations.

“The accord is significant because it lays the groundwork for a ‘win-win’ relationship by reflecting the national interests of Korea and the United States in a balanced manner,” Lee told Korean news agencies in Seoul December 4.

Both the U.S. Congress and the South Korean legislature must ratify the trade agreement. The final round of negotiations was led by U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk and Korean Trade Minister Kim Jong-hoon and his team.

The trade ministers met for four days in Columbia, Maryland, outside Washington. At issue is the 2007 U.S.-Korean Free Trade Agreement that was originally negotiated by the administration of former President George W. Bush. It became embroiled in congressional concerns about the auto trade and the beef trade. The trade agreement was signed June 30, 2007, but has not been ratified.

An obstacle was a 2.5 percent tariff the United States levies on Korean-built autos that the United States has agreed to phase out over five years. South Korea agreed to reduce its tariff on American autos to 4 percent from 8 percent immediately and phase out the remainder over five years.

South Korea is the United States’ seventh-largest trading partner and eighth-largest export market. In 2009 the United States exported \$28.6 billion in goods to South Korea and imported \$39.2 billion in Korean products, according to the U.S. Commerce Department. The United States exported 7,663 cars and light trucks to South Korea last year while importing 476,857 from South Korea.

The revised agreement allows for 25,000 cars per U.S. automaker, which is four times the number allowed under the original 2007 agreement, to be imported into South Korea annually, provided that they meet U.S. federal safety standards. South Korea also agreed to reduce taxes on U.S. autos and streamline current taxes based on engine size.

According to news reports, Korean economists estimate that South Korea should experience a surge in new jobs from the trade agreement over a 10-year period, with approximately 270,000 new jobs in the services sector, 79,000 new jobs in manufacturing and 10,000 in agriculture.

If finally approved, the trade agreement would become the second-largest free-trade agreement after the 1994 trade agreement with Canada and Mexico, which are the United States’ largest trading partners. The United States is also attempting to complete negotiations on free-trade agreements with Colombia and Panama.

White House advisers have said that expanding economic integration and trade liberalization in the Asia-Pacific region is a vital element in enabling the United States to export more and to grow the domestic economy. Expanding U.S. exports is a significant part of Obama’s National Export Initiative, which aims to double American exports by 2015 while lessening U.S. consumer demand as a driving force of the U.S. economy.

State’s Public Diplomacy Chief Opens Cultural Center in Indonesia

Washington — The Obama administration seeks to redefine “America’s engagement with the world as one based on mutual respect, mutual interests and collective action,” a senior State Department official told an audience in Jakarta, Indonesia, December 1.

“Governments acting alone cannot solve the problems which confront us or seize the opportunities which surround us,” Judith McHale, under secretary of state for public affairs and public diplomacy, said. “We are working hard to find new and innovative ways to expand and strengthen the relations between the people of the United States and people all over the world.”

During her trip to Indonesia, McHale visited Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Borobudur Temple in Magelang, Central Java, to engage Indonesians on a number of topics in a variety of venues. The centerpiece of her visit was the opening of the new U.S. cultural center in Indonesia: @america.

Other activities included a panel discussion on entrepreneurship education with university students and a tour of an ancient temple where volunteers are working to remove volcanic ash.

NEW AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER IN JAKARTA

After many months of planning, @america, the United States’ first high-tech cultural center, opened to the Indonesian public December 2.

At a December 1 gala in honor of the event, McHale described the center as an example of “what we hope will be the first of a new generation of American cultural centers.”

According to the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, @america is a one-of-a-kind, high-technology American cultural center where visitors can explore, experience and express their interests about the United States in innovative ways. In the physical and virtual spaces of @america, visitors will experience cutting-edge technology, interactive games and live events designed to facilitate people-to-people exchanges virtually and in real life.

The new center, developed by the embassy in collaboration with Indonesian and U.S. partners, aims to expand engagement between young Indonesians and young Americans. The Indonesian firm PT Ganesha Aggies Jaya designed and will manage @america. The center is located in the Pacific Place Mall in Central Jakarta and admission is free.

Visitors to @america, assisted by Indonesian “e-guides,” can use touch-screen monitors and tablet computers to access information about the diversity, culture, education, politics and history of the United States, and can share these same aspects of Indonesia with an American audience.

In her December 1 remarks, McHale outlined the ways in which the new center is breaking new ground for public diplomacy:

- Housing the center in a shopping mall makes it an accessible place to explore and experience the best of America.
- A dynamic, attractive, interactive facility offers unique programs and events that will especially appeal to young Indonesians.
- A customer-driven approach allows Indonesians to use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate with peers, and to provide feedback to @america that will allow the center to tailor programming to meet the demands of its audience.
- Partnering with U.S. corporations, nongovernmental organizations, universities and museums allows @america to showcase the best of U.S. creativity, ideals and ingenuity.

Programming themes at the center are scheduled to change every two months. The initial theme, oceans and marine environment, is illustrated by images and interactive displays provided by the Sant Ocean Hall of the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum of Natural History in Washington. Nonprofit groups The Nature Conservancy, the World Wildlife Fund and Conservation International provided @america with graphics and

information about their work on marine conservation and will have programs in the facility.

“Because Indonesia has the most diverse marine ecosystem in the world, scientists from our two countries are working to protect Indonesian waters, and the results of that work will be showcased at @america,” McHale said.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

At the University of Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta on December 3, the under secretary attended a panel discussion on entrepreneurship education. In addition to the local audience, students from dozens of universities throughout Indonesia participated via digital videoconference.

“The U.S.-Indonesia relationship is a critically important partnership. We are constantly looking for ways to mutually strengthen the relationship,” McHale said. “One particular area in which we engage with young people in Indonesia is entrepreneurship.”

She credited the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship held in Washington in April, which brought together more than 275 participants from more than 50 countries around the world, with deepening “ties between business leaders, foundations and entrepreneurs in the United States and Muslim communities around the world.”

Since the summit, the U.S. State Department has joined with the Indonesian attendees to form the Global Entrepreneurship Program Indonesia (GEPI), which is focused on supporting and empowering Indonesian entrepreneurs by marshalling partners, in the United States and in Indonesia, as well as multiple U.S. government programs designed around elements that are essential for creating a successful ecosystem for entrepreneurs.

“GEPI is a powerful demonstration of the U.S. government’s long-term commitment to advancing entrepreneurship in Indonesia – by providing expertise and tools geared at building local capacity,” McHale said.

Top U.S. Officials Arrive at COP-16

By Karin Rives
Staff Writer

Washington – With the leading U.S. climate negotiator, Todd Stern, already immersed in talks with his international counterparts, Energy Secretary Steven Chu arrived at COP-16 December 6 to underscore that the United States is not waiting for a legally binding treaty to tackle the climate change problem at home.

With a record \$90 billion in renewable energy investments under way, the world's second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases is pushing hard to reduce its dependency on fossil fuel — and for good reasons, Chu told a full house at the U.S. Center in Cancún, Mexico.

A Nobel Prize winner in physics and a renowned scientist, Chu predicted a steep rise in oil prices in coming decades, even if nations manage to reduce their consumption. With traditional oil reserves gradually being depleted, oil will increasingly have to come from remote locations such as the Arctic, which will drive up the price, he said.

Rising oil costs come in addition to the more acute problem of climate change. That should make the case clear, he said.

"Science is saying we're altering the climate of the Earth, and the question is, are we willing to make investments that will secure the economic future and protect the environment of our children and our grandchildren?" Chu said. He quoted an old Native American saying: "The Earth was not given to you by your parents; it was loaned to you by your children."

"Our generation better not break that trust," Chu said.

IN A RACE TO CUT CARBON

Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that Congress passed in 2009, the United States is set to double its power generation from renewable sources to 10 percent by 2012, a large shift considering that the country had a tiny fleet of renewables just a few years ago.

Meanwhile, new regulations are in place that will increase vehicle efficiency to 35 miles per gallon by 2016, and plans are to impose even stricter fuel-economy rules after that. Researchers funded by Energy Department grants are developing more efficient and longer-lasting batteries for electric cars that will make them competitive with gasoline vehicles within five years, Chu said.

The United States is also spending \$4 billion in public funds to research carbon-storage technologies, money that's matched by \$7 billion from the private sector, Chu said. Carbon storage is of interest to energy companies with large fleets of coal-fired plants, and other industries.

U.S. NEGOTIATOR: PROGRESS NEEDED ON ALL FRONTS

Arriving at the 16th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-16) on December 3, U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern told reporters, "Anyone who

says that any of these issues are too difficult or should be put off for another day is not trying hard enough."

Stern repeated what he's said many times in recent weeks: All issues identified under 2009's so-called Copenhagen Accord — which seeks to address climate needs in developing countries, slow the destruction of forests, set universal greenhouse gas reduction goals, and ensure that all parties are held accountable, among other things — can be achieved in tandem.

"A way forward is not simply to say, 'We'll work on the [issues] that are important to this group of countries, but not to that group of countries,'" he told reporters. "I think they can all be done."

U.S. and Russia Joining Forces to Tackle Drug Trafficking

By Sally Rountree
Staff Writer

Washington — Last July, the United States' Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) joined forces with the Russian Federal Drug Control Service (FSKN) to dismantle a cocaine-trafficking organization in St. Petersburg, Russia. In October, Russian and American authorities worked together in support of local partners to seize a ton of heroin in Afghanistan. And in November, the DEA and the Russian Customs Service (FTS) collaborated to intercept codeine tablets coming from Vladivostok for distribution throughout the Florida-Louisiana region. As a result of the joint investigation, additional narcotics — including cocaine, syringes and vials — were seized in Florida.

These are not isolated operations but the result of a new level of cooperation stemming from the Counternarcotics Working Group of the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission, established in 2009 by Presidents Obama and Dmitry Medvedev to improve the relationship between two countries that share common goals and face similar challenges.

The Vladivostok-to-Florida drug bust was the first "international controlled delivery" to the United States conducted between the DEA and any Russian law enforcement agency in eight years, said Michael Nowacoski, a DEA special agent based in Moscow. Controlled delivery is an investigative technique that allows specific consignments of illegal drugs or other controlled substances to pass through the territory of one or more states with the objective of identifying not only the street dealers but the individuals controlling the drug trade network.

"What the commission has done is provide regularity and high-level attention — and with it the positive push for

concrete results – to relationships that had existed previously,” said Mark Gul, the Bilateral Presidential Commission coordinator at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. “This cooperation is not only important in its own right, but it opens doors for joint work in other arenas as well.”

An important component of resetting the relations between the United States and Russia has been in the area of drug trafficking, Gil Kerlikowske, the director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, told reporters at a recent Washington Foreign Press Center briefing. “This is a global issue. ... What we must do is not only interdict drugs at the source countries, [but] also interdict them as they attempt to come into our borders.”

Toward that end, the DEA is teaming up with the FSKN to share intelligence and investigative efforts. In October, the Afghan Counter Narcotics Police conducted a successful interdiction operation, supported by the DEA and the FSKN, that resulted in the seizure of a ton of heroin in Afghanistan from four clandestine laboratories.

To expand on this successful partnership, DEA and FSKN authorities are also working jointly with the Counter Narcotics Police and their Central Asian counterparts to target regional drug barons who use the “northern route” to distribute Afghan opiates to Russia via Central Asia. U.S. and NATO troops and the Afghan National Security Forces are working together to break up the drug supply chain by interdicting drug shipments, arresting traffickers and shutting down drug labs, while U.S. and international partners are working with the Afghan government to provide farmers with sustainable alternatives to growing poppies.

With the additional impetus from the Bilateral Presidential Commission’s Counternarcotics Working Group, led by Kerlikowske and FSKN Director Viktor Ivanov, law enforcement agencies in both countries are not only identifying drug traffickers but targeting money launderers as well.

“We are alarmed by the growing drug problem in Russia and are now regularly sharing financial intelligence to stem the flow of money to and from drug traffickers,” U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Beyrle told the U.S.-Russia Business Council, meeting in San Francisco in October.

In May, the DEA and FSKN worked together to trace money and helped break up an international ring distributing cocaine throughout Russia. Russia also has provided information on a hawala financial network used to launder proceeds from heroin trafficking and subsidize Taliban and Afghan warlords, while the Treasury Department has identified Central Asian targets under review through the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin

Designation Act.

Information and investigative techniques are being shared at all levels. In February, the DEA hosted a “Precursor Chemical Investigator Workshop” for Russian agents in Moscow, and in September, FSKN agents attended money-laundering workshops in Florida and Louisiana, marking the first time that FSKN agents took part in DEA training in the United States. A workshop on financing illegal narcotics follows in 2011.

“Though the tentacles of the Afghan drug trade reach across continents and oceans, leaving virtually no country unaffected, the United States and Russia are working together to address this threat,” U.S. Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke wrote in a June opinion piece for the Russian newspaper Izvestia. “I am confident that we will see even greater benefits as a result of our growing cooperation.”

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