

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## Defense Secretary Headed to China, Japan, South Korea for Talks

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — An upcoming visit by Defense Secretary Robert Gates to Beijing emphasizes the importance that the United States places on building a sustained and reliable military-to-military relationship with China, Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell says.

Gates will visit Beijing for security talks January 9-12, and then travel to Tokyo to meet with senior Japanese officials January 13-14, Morrell told reporters recently. Gates will also make a brief stop in Seoul for talks with South Korean leaders.

The defense talks also underscore the U.S. commitment to improved Northeast Asian regional security in the aftermath of recent provocations by North Korea.

In October 2010, Gates met with China's national defense minister, General Liang Guanglie, in Hanoi, Vietnam, on the sidelines of the first Association of Southeast Asian Nations Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus. During brief talks with Liang, Gates accepted an invitation to visit China.

Morrell said the visit to Beijing is being viewed "as an essential part of a U.S.-China relationship that is positive in tone, cooperative in nature and comprehensive in scope." In addition to meetings with Liang in Beijing, Gates will also confer with other members of China's defense and political leadership, Morrell said.

"We look to use this trip to confirm recent progress in advancing the defense component of the U.S.-China relationship, expand upon those areas where we can cooperate, and sustain a dialogue aimed at improving our mutual understanding and reducing the risk of miscalculation," Morrell told reporters at the Pentagon on December 22.

U.S. and Chinese defense officials recently discussed how to develop more durable military-to-military relations. The nations have resumed low-level military discussions at a more technical level, Morrell said.

Under Secretary of Defense Michèle Flournoy met with Chinese General Ma Xiaotian, the deputy chief of the general staff of the People's Liberation Army, in Washington December 10. They discussed a range of security issues including North Korea's nuclear weapons development program, maritime security, and Iran's efforts to develop nuclear weapons.

"I won't say that we agreed on every issue; where we did differ, we had a very candid and frank and productive exchange of views," Flournoy told reporters at a Pentagon press briefing. "These kinds of talks, I believe, contribute to improving the basis for a more cooperative relationship between our two countries and our two militaries over time."

Improving military-to-military relations between the United States and China has been a significant concern of the Obama administration since early 2010, and Gates has repeatedly called for a resumption of consultations and visits. Gates travels to China to kick-start talks and prepare for Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to Washington January 19.

Flournoy said the December meeting with Ma was designed to help contribute to setting a positive tone and creating success in both of the upcoming meetings. "We also discussed avenues of cooperation across a broad range of regional security issues, including Africa, North Korea, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran," Flournoy said.

Flournoy and Ma exchanged views on the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review, which defines how and when the United States will employ nuclear weapons in its own defense, and the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense Review. "We discussed the importance of China continuing to make progress in improving its openness and transparency in defense matters," Flournoy added.

China chairs the Six-Party Talks that work to convince North Korea to forgo a nuclear weapons development program and efforts to build long-range ballistic missiles. China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Russia and the United States make up the Six-Party Talks.

China has also participated in the six-nation talks to convince Iran to forgo its nuclear ambitions. China along with Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States are engaged in talks with Iranian officials.

While in Japan, Gates will visit with Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa and other senior members of the Japanese government, Morrell said.

"We will use that portion of the trip to discuss recent security developments in the region and to further develop our long-term agenda for strengthening and deepening the bilateral alliance," Morrell said. "The visit will underscore the centrality of the U.S.-Japan relationship for addressing regional and global challenges, now and in the years to come."

In Seoul, Gates will meet with National Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin.

"They will discuss North Korea's recent actions and consult on the way forward for the alliance to address the threats posed by North Korean provocations and its nuclear and missile programs," Morrell said.

### **United States and China Prepare for President Hu's State Visit**

Washington — Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi has met with President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and other senior U.S. officials to prepare for Chinese President Hu Jintao's January 19 state visit to the United States.

Hu's visit is expected to include discussions on the trade relationship between the two countries, as well as U.S.-China cooperation against the nuclear activities of Iran and North Korea, according to administration officials.

In remarks with Foreign Minister Yang at the State Department January 5, Clinton said Hu's visit is "very much anticipated and looked forward to," and the Obama administration is "preparing diligently" for it.

"Both the minister and I feel a great sense of responsibility to ensure that it continues to be a positive, cooperative, comprehensive relationship between our two countries," Clinton said.

Yang said the U.S.-China relationship is "on the right track," and both countries are confronted with common challenges while also enjoying common opportunities.

"It is in the best interest of China, the United States and the world for us to continue to work together so that our relationship will bring more benefits to both our two people and to the people of the world," Yang said.

The Chinese foreign minister also met with President Obama and National Security Advisor Tom Donilon January 4, according to a statement from White House press secretary Robert Gibbs.

The statement said Obama joined the meeting and "reaffirmed his commitment to building a bilateral relationship that is comprehensive in scope, positive in achievement, and cooperative in nature." Obama said he looked forward to Hu's visit and effective U.S.-Chinese cooperation to address global challenges.

Donilon stressed the importance of taking effective efforts to reduce global economic imbalances and trade imbalances between China and the United States and discussed ways both countries could work together to "prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and to persuade North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons

program, to meet its commitments and international obligations, and to avoid destabilizing behavior," the statement said.

The statement also said Donilon and Yang discussed the upcoming referendum in southern Sudan and agreed on the importance of ensuring the vote "proceeds peacefully and on time and that the results be accepted by Sudan and the international community."

### **U.S., Australian, Canadian Rotary Clubs Partner to Help Cambodia**

By Nancy L. Pontius  
Special Correspondent

Lakewood, Colorado — Rotary clubs in the United States, Cambodia, Australia and Canada are working together through Sustainable Cambodia Inc. — a U.S.-based nongovernmental organization — to help more than 15,000 Cambodians in 18 rural villages in central Cambodia.

In the Svay Att Commune, families such as that of Phun Saoly and Mut Phall can send their children to a Sustainable Cambodia school. The couple also has received piglets, irrigation water, fruit and vegetable seeds, clean drinking water and small loans to grow mushrooms and raise chickens.

Sustainable Cambodia partners with villagers, helping them improve their quality of life, Richard Allen, volunteer chief executive officer of Sustainable Cambodia, told America.gov. "We are an empowerment organization — not an 'aid' organization."

The group focuses on villagers' priorities and provides training and funding. In return, Cambodian families commit their labor and agree to help surrounding villages. The process develops a sense of empowerment and ownership, Allen said.

Sustainable Cambodia programs include projects based on the most successful development strategies from around the world:

- Preschool day care centers, which communities often see as a priority to allow mothers to work and provide intellectual stimulation for children.
- Kindergarten to 12th-grade instruction. In 2010, Rotary clubs in Western Australia funded construction of five new primary schools in remote Bakan district and financed 84,299 high-protein meals for seven preschools in Pursat province, Allan Lewins, a past district governor from Rotary International in Western Australia, told America.gov. During 2011, the clubs will support a

preschool annex, a latrine, a well and a library at each of the five new schools.

- Resources for safe drinking water, including wells, large community ponds, biosand filters and rooftop rainwater harvesting. In addition to improving the residents' health, when clean water is close to a community, "kids don't have to spend many hours a day hiking for water and therefore can stay in school," Allen said.
- Irrigation systems, which supply water for crops during the five-month dry season.
- Alternative agriculture, which reduces the villagers' reliance on rice, bringing them seeds, training and supplies for growing fruits and vegetables year-round.
- "Pass on" animals — providing a family with a breeding pair of animals when they agree to receive animal-care training and give offspring to neighbors. The neighbors also must agree to give animals to additional neighbors, perpetuating the cycle.
- Village banks that offer microloans to families at low interest rates. To encourage repayment, initial loans to a few families must be repaid before more families can receive loans, Allen said. On average, at least 95 percent of loans are repaid. The village keeps the interest paid to fund future projects.
- Community rice banks, which provide safe storage for extra rice crops that can be consumed later or sold for higher prices during the dry season. The community retains a percentage of the sales to support the rice bank.

Nothing is given outright to the villagers. For each project, Cambodians contribute materials and all labor, Allen said. For instance, when constructing community ponds — that often span a tenth of a hectare and are 2.4 to 3 meters deep — Rotarians supply "funding that would have gone to pay for heavy equipment, which instead is paid to families for their labor," Allen said. Plus, money is provided for shovels, wheelbarrows and fish that are stocked in the ponds and raised for food or sold.

Funding for a community is reduced gradually after three to five years, as residents become more and more self-reliant. By then, the quality of life in the village tends to have improved dramatically and the Cambodians have the self-created resources to sustain the new economy.

Sustainable Cambodia employs about 80 Cambodians locally to supervise and direct projects. All other staff members are volunteers.

## U.S., AUSTRALIAN PARTNERSHIP

To make the most effective use of their resources, U.S. and Australian Rotary clubs joined forces, Lewins said. The relationship with the Australian Rotarians "quickly grew into a really neat partnership," Allen added.

Lewins believes because "we are all part of the Rotary International organization, we jointly see ourselves as part of a greater movement to assist, wherever possible, those people less fortunate than ourselves — to help them move onwards and upwards toward a better life."

Rotary International says there are 33,000 Rotary clubs in more than 200 countries and geographic areas. Club members "provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world," according to the Rotary International website.

In November 2010, Australian and American Rotarians visited Cambodia. The Australians observed the progress of children in seven preschools, where student health and hygiene have improved noticeably since 2009, Lewins said.

"There is still another year [for] this project before we hand [it] over to the villagers," he said. "The nutrition program will then become self-sustaining, operated by those villagers, while [we will] move the program on to other rural preschools in need."

During the trip, U.S. staff worked with Cambodian staff "like the management team of a company," Allen said, "to keep everybody in sync and make sure the Cambodian staff members have the skills they need to succeed."

## Côte d'Ivoire Crisis a Challenge to Democracy Worldwide

By Charles W. Corey  
Staff Writer

Washington — The political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire stands as a challenge to democracy not only in that country but across West Africa and worldwide, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson told reporters January 5, while also praising African leaders and regional organizations for their response to the crisis.

Carson, who was asked to comment on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire while briefing reporters on the January 9 referendum in Sudan, said, "There is no question that the election in Côte d'Ivoire was stolen by President [Laurent] Gbagbo and those around him." Carson said Gbagbo's "continued presence in office amounts to a theft of the

election.”

In the second round of Côte d’Ivoire’s presidential election November 28, challenger and former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara was declared the winner, having secured 54.1 percent of the vote over incumbent President Gbagbo.

“This is a moment that is critical for the strengthening of democratic institutions and democratic values around the continent,” Carson told reporters. He said the United States has been “extraordinarily pleased” by the statements and actions of the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

“Africa’s regional and subregional organizations have stood up for democracy and for the voice of the people,” he said. “I think this is a sign of the progress that we continue to see in Africa and the commitment of many of Africa’s leaders and regional organizations to support democracy.”

“We believe very strongly that President Gbagbo should in fact leave office, that he should turn over the reins of government to the properly elected president, Alassane Ouattara. He still has an opportunity to accept a number of opportunities that have been put on the table, but the longer that this crisis goes on,” Carson warned, “the chances for those opportunities to remain diminish.”

Before the election, both candidates had agreed to abide by the election results. The Ivorian people had not had an open and transparent election for more than 10 years.

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