

American

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Secretary Clinton Says U.S. Wants Human Rights Protected in Mideast

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says that the United States does not want to see continued violence and civil strife in countries such as Bahrain, Libya and Yemen, but it does want to see human rights protected and political reforms made.

“This is not an easy journey for any people to make,” Clinton said during an interview on the ABC News television program “This Week” February 20. “In general, Americans are in favor of human rights, freedom, [and] democracy.”

The United States continues to promote the advancement of human rights, freedom and democracy, she said.

“We try to hold everyone to a similar standard, but we cannot dictate the outcomes. We cannot tell countries what they’re going to do,” Clinton said. “We had, you know, no control over what happened in Egypt. We expressed our opinion as we went along and we’re working with our Egyptian counterparts so that their transition is peaceful, meaningful, transparent, produces results.”

Clinton said that the United States will continue to work with those yearning for political change because of the belief that democracies are greater forces for stability in the world.

“With Bahrain, as they move toward greater reform, which we have consistently encouraged, recommended and urged, we’re going to be supporting that, and we will speak out where we see them violating human rights and using violence inappropriately,” Clinton said.

President Obama condemned the violence in Bahrain and spoke with King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa by telephone February 18 to discuss the ongoing situation in the Gulf state, according to White House press secretary Jay Carney. Bahrain is home to the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet Headquarters.

“The president reiterated his condemnation of the violence used against peaceful protesters, and strongly urged the government of Bahrain to show restraint, and to hold those responsible for the violence accountable,” Carney told reporters traveling with the president on the U.S. West Coast.

Earlier on February 19, National Security Advisor Tom Donilon spoke by telephone with Bahraini Crown Prince

Salam bin Hamad al-Khalifa, following up on the president’s conversation with the king, according to the White House.

Obama had called for restraint by the governments of Bahrain, Libya and Yemen following news reports of violence in response to protests. The president has said that the three countries must show respect for the rights of its citizens to demonstrate peacefully for political and economic reforms.

“We express our condolences to the family and friends of those who have been killed during the demonstrations,” Obama said in a statement February 18 released by the White House. “Wherever they are, people have certain universal rights including the right to peaceful assembly.”

Navy Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, is traveling to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Djibouti and Kuwait for a weeklong visit to show U.S. strategic support with its allies, Joint Chiefs spokesman Captain John Kirby told reporters.

“Though this trip was planned well before the recent unrest in the region, the chairman will be interested to gain the perspectives of leaders here about these protest movements,” Kirby said.

U.S. Following Three-Part Strategy in Afghanistan, Secretary Clinton Says

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the United States is following a three-part strategy to support transition in Afghanistan, a strategy through which Afghans will “take responsibility for their own future.”

Clinton spoke about U.S. policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan February 18 at the Asia Society in New York.

“We are following a strategy with three mutually reinforcing tracks — three surges, if you will: a military offensive against al-Qaida terrorists and Taliban insurgents; a civilian campaign to bolster the governments, economies and civil societies of Afghanistan and Pakistan to undercut the pull of the insurgency; and an intensified diplomatic push to bring the Afghan conflict to an end and chart a new and more secure future for the region,” she said.

The diplomatic surge, Clinton said, aims to support “an Afghan-led political process to split the weakened Taliban off from al-Qaida and reconcile those who will renounce violence and accept the Afghan constitution with an increasingly stable Afghan government,” leaving al-Qaida

“alone and on the run.”

Clinton emphasized that as the transition proceeds and Afghan leadership strengthens, a process of political reconciliation with former Taliban militants who agree to those conditions “will become increasingly viable.” Clinton added that successful reconciliation will reduce threats to the Afghan government and make the transition more sustainable.

“In 2001 – after 9/11, I would remind us all – the Taliban chose to defy the international community and protect al-Qaida. That was the wrong choice, and they have paid a heavy price,” Clinton said. “Today, the escalating pressure of our military campaign is sharpening a similar decision for the Taliban: Break ties with al-Qaida, renounce violence and abide by the Afghan constitution, and you can rejoin Afghan society; refuse, and you will continue to face the consequences of being tied to al-Qaida as an enemy of the international community.”

The Taliban, Clinton added, “cannot wait us out. They cannot defeat us. And they cannot escape this choice.”

Achieving and maintaining reconciliation will depend on the support of Afghanistan’s neighbors, Clinton said, with Pakistan having a pivotal role.

“For reconciliation to succeed, Pakistan will have to be part of the process. It will have to respect Afghanistan’s sovereignty and work with Afghanistan to improve regional security,” Clinton said. She called on Pakistan to take “decisive steps” to ensure that Afghan Taliban militants do not operate from Pakistan’s border regions.

The secretary said the three-part plan is part of the U.S. vision for transition in Afghanistan, reaffirmed by President Obama in his December 2010 policy review and endorsed previously by NATO at the November 2010 summit in Lisbon, Portugal.

The transition is set to launch formally in March, with troop reductions starting in July based on conditions in the country. Clinton said the process will be completed by the end of 2014.

The secretary’s speech was the first in a series of Richard Holbrooke Memorial addresses at the Asia Society. Ambassador Holbrooke was the State Department’s special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan when he died in December 2010. Clinton announced during her remarks that Holbrooke will be succeeded by veteran diplomat Marc Grossman.

Grossman will “marshal the full range of our policy resources to support responsible Afghan-led

reconciliation that brings the conflict to a peaceful conclusion,” and will “actively engage with states in the region and the international community to advance that process,” Clinton said.

Clinton repeated the “enduring commitment of the United States” to regional stability, but emphasized that the people and leaders of South Asia are ultimately responsible for creating their own futures. She said if countries of the region are able to move past their historic conflicts and cooperate to seize 21st century opportunities, “there are no limits to what they can achieve.”

Marc Grossman New U.S. Representative for Afghanistan, Pakistan

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says veteran diplomat Marc Grossman will be President Obama’s new special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, succeeding Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, who died in December.

Speaking at the Asia Society in New York February 18, Clinton said Grossman “knows our allies and understands how to mobilize common action to meet shared challenges.”

Working with a team of officials from various sectors of the U.S. government, Grossman will “marshal the full range of our policy resources to support responsible Afghan-led reconciliation that brings the conflict to a peaceful conclusion,” and will “actively engage with states in the region and the international community to advance that process,” Clinton said.

Ambassador Grossman has nearly 30 years of public service, culminating in his 2001 appointment as the under secretary of state for political affairs, the third-highest-ranking official in the State Department. He served as under secretary until his retirement in 2005. Grossman was also the U.S. ambassador to Turkey from 1994 to 1997 and the assistant secretary of state for European affairs from 1997 to 2000.

Grossman will leave his current position as vice chairman at the Washington-based international consulting firm Cohen Group in order to return to public service.

President Obama created the position of special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan shortly after his inauguration in January 2009. Speaking on January 22, 2009, Secretary Clinton said the United States needed to integrate its approach to the two countries and engage “NATO and other key friends, allies, and those around

the world who are interested in supporting these efforts.”

Special Representative Holbrooke was tasked with coordinating the U.S. approach to both countries “across the entire government,” including the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the National Security Council and the Defense Department, in “an effort to achieve United States’ strategic goals in the region,” she said.

Since Holbrooke’s death, his deputy Frank Ruggiero has served as the acting special representative.

Exhibition Explores African Americans’ Imprint on U.S. and World

By Yvette Ridenour
Special Correspondent

Washington — African-American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois once asked, “Would America have been America without her Negro people?” The answer is an unequivocal “no,” according to an expansive traveling exhibition that explores more than 400 years of U.S. history.

Du Bois’ question was the inspiration for *America I AM: The African American Imprint*, which looks at the contributions of African Americans to every aspect of life in the United States. This impact is felt internationally as well, from the popularity of jazz and rap to the lasting inspiration of the civil rights movement.

America I Am came to the National Geographic Museum in Washington early in February for Black History Month. The exhibition presents multimedia displays and more than 200 historical and cultural artifacts, including a basketball jersey worn by legendary athlete Michael Jordan, a purple guitar belonging to the musician Prince and Louis Armstrong’s bugle.

America I AM was developed in partnership with talk-show host Tavis Smiley and the Cincinnati Museum Center. “We could not tell the whole story, but we’ve told a big part of the story of the huge impact of African Americans on our world,” said curator John E. Fleming, director emeritus of the Cincinnati Museum Center in Ohio.

ARTIFACTS OF STRUGGLE AND TRIUMPH

As early as the 1500s, African slaves were brought to what is now America by Spanish explorers. These Africans imported their culture to the New World, enriching local music, storytelling, cuisine and crafts, and bringing knowledge of advanced methods of farming, fishing and animal husbandry. The deep spiritual legacy of their African heritage gave them the strength and faith to endure the brutality with which they often were treated.

The African influence on American culture increased exponentially during 300 years of slavery.

The exhibition includes many poignant artifacts, including the “Door of No Return” from the Cape Coast Castle in Ghana, one of the portals through which millions of slaves passed to board ships bound for Europe and the Americas. Also featured are the arrest card on which Rosa Parks was fingerprinted after refusing to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955, and the door key and stool from the jail cell where Martin Luther King Jr. wrote his “Letter from Birmingham Jail” in 1963.

Visitors can also see the robe Muhammad Ali wore during training for the “Rumble in the Jungle,” his 1974 boxing match in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) against George Foreman, and a gown worn by opera singer Marian Anderson. A suit of clothing that belonged to abolitionist Frederick Douglass is on display with a letter from President Abraham Lincoln enabling Douglass to move between Union lines during the Civil War to recruit black soldiers.

“In many ways,” said Fleming, “African Americans made American popular culture what it is today, especially in music and dance. Jazz is one of the only truly innovative cultural forms created in America, and it has spread across the world.” African rhythms led to blues, ragtime and jazz — and out of jazz came rock ‘n’ roll. The impact of African Americans in every field is “too far-reaching for any one exhibition to convey,” he said.

A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Smiley said he hopes families will bring their children to the exhibition so they can discover that “the place we call America simply would not exist were it not for the contributions of African Americans — over 400 years’ worth.”

The exhibition invites visitors, especially those of African-American heritage, to record 30-second comments about their experience. “I encourage everyone to come out and see this exhibit, not just black people — everyone,” says one young black woman. “You’ll learn a lot. ... You’ll really be touched.”

America I AM: The African American Imprint will be at the National Geographic Museum through May 1. It next travels to St. Louis.

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