

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama Welcomes Arab League Support for Libyan People

By Merle Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington —The Obama administration welcomes a decision by the 22-member Arab League to support a no-fly zone over Libya because the move strengthens international pressure on Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi, White House press secretary Jay Carney said March 12.

“The international community is unified in sending a clear message that the violence in Libya must stop and that the Qadhafi regime must be held accountable,” Carney said in a prepared statement.

The United States will continue to advance efforts to pressure the Qadhafi regime, support the Libyan opposition and prepare for all contingencies, Carney said. And the United States will work in close coordination with international partners, he added.

At a news conference on March 11, President Obama said Qadhafi is “on the wrong side of history. I believe that the Libyan people are anxious for freedom and the removal of somebody who has suppressed them for decades now.”

The Arab League called for the U.N. Security Council to impose a no-fly zone over Libya as soon as possible in an effort to curb violence against those who have actively opposed the Qadhafi regime, according to a statement from the group.

In its March 12 statement, the league asked “the United Nations to shoulder its responsibility ... to impose a no-fly zone over the movement of Libyan military planes and to create safe zones in the places vulnerable to airstrikes.”

Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa told reporters in Cairo after the conference that the measures being urged are intended to be humanitarian to protect Libyan civilians and others. According to published news reports, Syria, Algeria and Mauritania voted against the measure.

Moussa told reporters that the decision would be sent to the United Nation, which will consider the request and determine how it might be enforced.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said during congressional hearings on March 10 that she is traveling to Paris for consultations with foreign ministers from the Group of Eight (G8) nations and Libyan opposition leaders on March 14 and March 15. From Paris, Clinton is

expected to travel on to Cairo and then to Tunis, Tunisia.

The G8 countries are the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States.

During her consultations in Egypt and Tunisia, Clinton told the congressional committee, she would press for greater democratic changes.

Obama has called on Qadhafi to leave power now, saying that he and his government must be held accountable for violating the human rights of the Libyan people and brutalizing them.

In a telephone call with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on February 26, Obama shared his deep concern about the Libyan government’s continued violation of human rights and brutal treatment of the Libyan people, and said the use of violence against the Libyan people calls into question the legitimacy of Qadhafi’s rule, the White House said.

Clinton further amplified the president’s position, saying that it is clear the Libyan people want Qadhafi out of power.

“We have always said that the Qadhafi government’s future is a matter for the Libyan people to decide, and they have made themselves clear,” Clinton said February 26. “When a leader’s only means of staying in power is to use mass violence against his own people, he has lost the legitimacy to rule and needs to do what is right for his country by leaving now.”

The call comes as the United States has imposed new financial and travel sanctions on Qadhafi, his regime and his family along with 10 of his closest supporters and associates.

Libya has been gripped by civil strife that began with nonviolent demonstrations against the government on February 15. Now, most of the eastern half of the North African nation, which faces the Mediterranean Sea and is bordered by Tunisia and Egypt, is under partial control by rebelling Libyans, but street fighting and protests have spread to the borders of the Libyan capital city, Tripoli.

The U.N. Security Council voted 15-0 on February 26 to impose political and financial sanctions on Qadhafi, his supporters and his government in a move intended to impose immediate measures to stop the violence, ensure accountability and provide humanitarian assistance to the Libyan people.

Additionally, the U.N. Security Council measure is the first unanimous resolution that refers the case of “heinous

human rights violations to the International Criminal Court," says U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice.

The U.N. sanctions also impose a strong arms embargo and take steps against the use of mercenaries by the Libyan government to attack its own people, Rice told reporters.

U.S. Mobilizing to Provide Aid Throughout Japan

By Merle Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — At the request of the Japanese government, the United States is mobilizing military and civilian assistance for relief efforts throughout Japan, U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos said March 12 in Tokyo.

"The Japan Self-Defense Forces are among the most prepared and capable in the world in dealing with a disaster-response situation, and the U.S. military is prepared to augment their efforts with all available assets and equipment upon request," Roos said at the U.S. Embassy.

"Because of the longstanding and close working relationship between the U.S. military and its Japanese counterparts on a daily basis, the United States military has humanitarian assistance capabilities positioned in the affected regions that are ready to support emergency relief efforts and minimize human suffering," Roos added.

The U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, through the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, provided an initial \$100,000 in immediate disaster relief assistance, according to an agency fact sheet.

Shortly after a magnitude 8.9 earthquake struck Japan near Honshu on March 11, the U.S. Air Force began receiving civilian aircraft at the Yokota Air Base. U.S. Air Force and U.S. Marine helicopters and transport planes moved immediately from bases in Okinawa to military bases on Honshu, Roos said.

The Navy aircraft carrier group led by the USS Ronald Reagan has arrived off the east coast of Japan to begin support missions along with a U.S. 7th Fleet aircraft carrier group that was already stationed off Japan. All of the military services with capabilities from medical care and communications to civil engineering at bases in Japan have been positioned to offer support as needed.

USAID has been working with the departments of State, Defense, Energy and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to coordinate the U.S. response in support of the Japanese government, USAID said March 12.

Within hours of the earthquake, USAID established a response management team in Washington to help coordinate the U.S. response, and a USAID disaster assistance response team was sent to Japan to work with the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo to coordinate U.S. assets, USAID said.

USAID has deployed two urban search-and-rescue (USAR) teams — one from Fairfax County, Virginia, and one from Los Angeles County, California — to Japan comprised of 150 personnel and 12 specially trained dogs to detect survivors of the earthquake. The teams were scheduled to arrive March 13 in Misawa, USAID said.

The Los Angeles USAR team recently returned from duty assisting the New Zealand government following an earthquake that struck in February in Christchurch.

"Upon arrival, the teams will immediately begin the search for live victims alongside the Japanese and international search and rescue teams," USAID said.

President Obama to Deliver Major Address to Latin America in Chile

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama will deliver a major address while in Santiago, Chile, that explains the importance of Latin America to the United States. It will coincide with the 50th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's 1961 announcement of the Alliance for Progress that established economic cooperation between the United States and Latin America nations.

At a joint press conference March 10 in Washington, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Chilean Foreign Minister Alfredo Moreno discussed bilateral relations and the president's trip to the region.

Moreno told reporters that "we are delighted with the visit President Obama will do on March 21st to Chile. We feel that this is a significant signal to Chile and to the whole region."

The two diplomats met at the State Department to complete final preparations for the president's visit to Brazil, Chile and El Salvador March 19–23.

Moreno said Chile and the United States have many issues of common interest, including education, energy and technology, as well as curbing international crime, caring for the shared environment, human rights and democratic governance, economic development and social inclusion. "We hope to strengthen this partnership between Chile and the U.S., and we are really forward-looking, taking into account the new realities that we have

in our region.”

Obama met with President Sebastian Piñera during the April 2010 Global Nuclear Security Summit held in Washington, where the president thanked Chile for promoting nuclear nonproliferation and removing all highly enriched uranium from the country.

Clinton told reporters that the Obama administration holds great admiration for the extraordinary progress that Chile has made. “Its recent history of transitioning to a full democracy is extremely important in today’s world,” she said.

Chile has been an active participant in multilateral efforts to advance peace and stability in the hemisphere, said Peter Meyer, a Latin American affairs analyst with the U.S. Congressional Research Service (CRS). “In recent years, Chile has contributed forces to the U.N. mission in Haiti, collaborated on regional counternarcotics efforts and engaged in diplomatic efforts to resolve political crises in Venezuela, Bolivia and Honduras,” Meyer said.

These efforts, Meyer said, have helped provide a moderating influence in the region and advanced policy goals similar to those of the United States.

Clinton said that as the president is clearly demonstrating by making his hemispheric speech from Santiago, the United States is “very proud of our strong bilateral relationship, but we also see the opportunity for Chile to play a role regionally in helping neighbors to understand what it takes to have the kind of positive story that Chile now represents.”

CHILEAN ASSISTANCE

In the aftermath of Chile’s devastating earthquake in February 2010 that killed more than 500 people and affected more than 2 million others, the United States provided \$9.8 million in humanitarian assistance. The assistance included a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) team to identify humanitarian needs; relief supplies such as satellite phones, emergency shelters, mobile water-treatment units and electric generators; and the deployment of two U.S. military C-130 cargo planes to transport emergency relief supplies.

And the United States dispatched a NASA team to Chile in October 2010 to assist in the rescue of 33 trapped miners.

“Chile has worked with the United States to advance democracy, human rights and free trade in the Western Hemisphere,” Meyer said in a recent CRS report. “Chile and the United States also maintain strong commercial ties.”

After the implementation of the 2004 free-trade agreement between the United States and Chile, trade more than doubled to \$15.3 billion by 2009. The agreement established immediate duty-free treatment for 85 percent of trade in consumer and industrial products. Chile’s top exports to the United States include fruit, copper, seafood, wood and precious stones, while the United States exports to Chile heavy machinery, oil, aircraft, electrical machinery and motor vehicles.

Additional areas of cooperation between the two partners include renewable energy, trade and investment and regional security issues, Meyer said in a recent CRS report on U.S.-Chile relations.

ENERGY COOPERATION

Meyer said Chile in recent years has worked to diversify its energy supply and sought to develop sufficient energy resources from renewable sources. At the Fifth Summit of the Americas in April 2009, Obama introduced the Energy and Climate Partnership for the Americas, which is designed to foster regional cooperation in energy efficiency, renewable energy investment and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The United States and Chile signed an agreement on cooperation in clean energy technologies in June 2009. That agreement calls for assessments of renewable resource potential; identification of projects suitable for joint research and development; the exchange of scientific and technical information; and the exchange of scientists, engineers and other energy specialists.

U.S. Geologists Explain Science Behind Japanese Earthquake

By Lauren Monsen
Staff Writer

Washington — A massive earthquake measured at magnitude 8.9 struck northeast Japan March 11, the most powerful quake in that country’s recorded history, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

The earthquake triggered a tsunami on Japan’s east coast, killing at least 15 people and sweeping away houses, cars and boats. Because the earthquake’s hypocenter, or rupture point, was 24.4 kilometers (15.2 miles) deep, it qualifies as a shallow earthquake, which is the most hazardous kind, according to USGS seismologist Juan Cantavella.

“The closer an earthquake is to the epicenter — the surface, where people are — the more dangerous it is,” Cantavella explained. “As a general rule, if the initial rupture point is less than 100 kilometers, it’s a shallow quake. An intermediate quake would be between 100 to

300 kilometers, and anything below that is considered a deep earthquake. The deepest [earthquakes] are about 600 kilometers or so" below the earth's surface.

Japan's earthquake was followed by at least 19 aftershocks, affecting dozens of cities and villages along the country's eastern shoreline. Even Japan's capital city, Tokyo, hundreds of miles from the quake's epicenter, experienced violent tremors of magnitude 6. The quake has caused significant damage to energy infrastructure, although nuclear facilities are said to be unaffected.

Earthquakes have only been recorded in Japan since the 1800s, but the next most powerful quake occurred there in 1896, measuring 8.5 on the Richter scale. That earthquake produced about 27,000 fatalities.

U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos said U.S. military forces stationed in Japan are ready to work with Japanese authorities to deal with the earthquake. All U.S. Navy vessels deployed in Japan, including those at Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture, and Sasebo, Nagasaki Prefecture, were safe, and no injuries to any 7th Fleet personnel or damage to the fleet's assets have been reported, the Navy said.

"We will continue to monitor the situation and coordinate with the municipal, prefectural and national governments in the event we are requested to provide assistance by the Japanese government," the Navy said in a statement.

The March 11 earthquake follows on the heels of two other deadly earthquakes in the Pacific Rim. On February 22, New Zealand suffered an earthquake measured at magnitude 6.3, and on March 10, a 5.8-magnitude earthquake occurred in China. Despite the short intervals between each quake, "it's very unlikely" that these events are related in any way, USGS seismologist Robert Williams said.

"The earth is always sending out pretty big earthquakes fairly consistently," Williams said. "But because of the distances between these earthquakes, they're almost certainly not related." He pointed out, however, that earthquakes do trigger lesser quakes, or aftershocks, in surrounding areas, as the Japanese earthquake demonstrates. The aftershocks can be lethal as well.

Japan's earthquake prompted tsunami warnings for the entire Pacific area, including South America, the U.S. West Coast, Canada and Alaska.

Since the mammoth Indian Ocean tsunami that struck in December 2004, killing more than 230,000 people in 14 countries, an increasingly sophisticated global system has been created to detect and respond to earthquakes and tsunamis. The UNESCO Intergovernmental

Oceanographic Commission provides oversight and coordination – and many nations contribute technical and financial help – to support seismic and tsunami warning systems in the Indian Ocean, the northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean, and the Pacific.

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