

American

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U.S. Plans Transition to Support Role for Libya Operations

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington – Although the United States has played a prominent role in the first phase of the international coalition's military activities in Libya, the Obama administration said the U.S. contribution will be diminishing as other members of the coalition take the lead.

President Obama's deputy national security adviser for communications, Ben Rhodes, said March 21 that the Obama administration is consulting with its European allies and Arab partners about "what the command structure will be when we transition to a coalition command and enforcement of the no-fly zone" that was authorized by U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973.

Speaking to reporters in Santiago, Chile, Rhodes said the United States has been instrumental in efforts to rapidly take out Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi's air-defense systems and air assets, as well as taking action to stop the offensive of his forces into Benghazi, but the U.S. contribution to the military effort will shift toward a support role, while its coalition allies will take the lead in enforcing the no-fly zone.

President Obama had felt it was necessary to take urgent action with the international community to stop the advance of Qadhafi's forces and protect the Libyan people, Rhodes said.

"Within days or hours even, it was expected that [Qadhafi] would get to Benghazi, a city of 700,000 people that was the center of the opposition, that he had told he would show no mercy. If ever there was an example of an imminent, urgent humanitarian danger, we believed that this was [one]," he said.

The imposition of the no-fly zone prevents Qadhafi from using air assets against his people and also helps to create the conditions to allow humanitarian aid workers and supplies to reach the population, he said.

Rhodes said that along with transitioning to a support role, the United States does not intend to broaden the military action beyond what has been authorized by the United Nations.

Representatives of the Libyan opposition had urged the United States to help implement a no-fly zone, but they "expressly did not want the introduction, for instance, of foreign ground forces or a more robust military mandate," he said. The Libyans "are the ones driving the

change from within Libya. What we are doing is stopping the humanitarian crisis."

The Obama administration intends to continue working to isolate the Qadhafi regime and urges the international community to do the same in order to create "a broader sense of momentum that this is not going to go in Qadhafi's favor."

Rhodes said the global community can play "a very strong role in sending a signal that history is not on the side of Qadhafi, that people who are aligned with the aspirations of the Libyan people and the Libyan opposition ... have the legitimacy of popular support that he himself has lost."

The White House said President Obama spoke with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan on March 21 to thank Turkey for its assistance in facilitating the release and safe passage to Tunisia of four journalists from the New York Times who had been detained by Libyan forces.

According to a March 22 White House statement, both leaders reaffirmed their determination to protect the Libyan people by fully implementing U.N. Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973, and agreed that "this will require a broad-based international effort, including Arab states, to implement and enforce the U.N. resolutions, based on national contributions and enabled by NATO's unique multinational command-and-control capabilities to ensure maximum effectiveness."

The statement added that Obama and Erdogan "underscored their shared commitment to the goal of helping provide the Libyan people an opportunity to transform their country, by installing a democratic system that respects the people's will."

QADHAFI NOT IN COMPLIANCE WITH U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL

Admiral Samuel Locklear, who commands U.S. naval forces in Europe and Africa, spoke to reporters March 22 from the USS Mount Whitney in the Mediterranean Sea. He said the international coalition consists of "13 nations that are either here or moving forces in this direction."

He said forces from Qatar are currently en route and anticipated "they will be up and flying in the coalition by the weekend."

Qadhafi's forces are still in breach of the U.N. Security Council, Locklear said, noting their continued attacks on civilians in the city of Misurata. Although his forces have been forced from Benghazi, they have yet to pull back from Zawiyah and Ajdabiya, as well as Misurata, he said.

"If Colonel Qadhafi would meet that requirement, would have a cease-fire implemented; stop all attacks against citizens and withdraw from the places that we've told him to withdraw; establish water, electricity and gas supplies to all areas and allow humanitarian assistance, then the fighting would stop. Our job would be over," Locklear said.

In the meantime, the no-fly zone is in place and is proving to be effective. "We have diminished his ability, I think, from an air-defense and an air force perspective to the point where I'm comfortable with a no-fly zone. And then we're going to continue to pursue all actions necessary to make him comply with the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973," Locklear said.

U.S., El Salvador to Strengthen Ties

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama and El Salvador's president, Mauricio Funes, say they plan to expand collaboration on development, energy and regional security.

"I think the partnership that we're forging together is exactly what's needed in the Americas today — neighbors joining with neighbors to realize progress that none of us can achieve alone. Every nation, I believe, no matter how large or how small, can contribute to that progress. And I believe that under the leadership of President Funes, El Salvador can be a source of great prosperity and security for this region for many years to come," Obama said during a joint press conference with Funes March 22.

The two held talks on a series of bilateral, regional and global issues before addressing reporters at the National Palace in San Salvador.

Funes called Obama's trip to Latin America "fundamental," and said after decades of hard-fought political reforms, the region "deserves the fruits of this great struggle for human rights and the strengthening of our democracies."

The two leaders said a key issue in their discussions was regional security. Funes stressed the importance of prevention strategies, and called investment in social policies "the best weapon to combat and reduce crime in the region."

Obama announced the launch of the Central American Citizen Security Partnership, under which the United States will focus \$200 million "to address the social and economic forces that drive young people towards criminality."

"We'll help strengthen courts, civil society groups and institutions that uphold the rule of law," he said, adding that the United States will work closely with regional and international partners "to confront the narcotics traffickers and gangs that have caused so much violence in all of our countries."

The leaders said they also spoke about increasing trade and fiscal growth across Central America. Obama announced a new effort, the Crossroads Partnership, under which countries in the region will work to make borders more efficient and secure, "encouraging trade and economic growth rather than constraining it."

Obama said the two countries are deepening efforts to pursue sustainable development and to address climate change. He commended El Salvador as a leader in geothermal energy and praised the country for agreeing to host a center where regional leaders "can come together to find new ways to reduce emissions and prevent deforestation."

He also highlighted El Salvador's role in the Partnership for Growth initiative, a key element of the Obama administration's approach to development.

"Instead of the old donor-recipient model, we're working as partners, with El Salvador in the lead, to confront the hurdles to growth and development. As El Salvador's largest trading partner, we'll help identify reforms that can mobilize private investment, increase trade and create opportunities for the Salvadoran people. And one of the most important steps is to foster collaborations between government and the private sector because both have so much to gain when people are lifted out of poverty and contribute to their country's prosperity," Obama said.

He commended the country for embracing a "vision of economic growth and social progress that is inclusive of all segments of Salvadoran society" and said the United States wants to be a partner in the process.

El Salvador is the third country Obama has visited during his five-day tour of Latin America. He has also stopped in Brazil and Chile, and is set to return to Washington March 23.

The White House announced the president will return a few hours earlier than scheduled to deal with events in Libya, where U.S. and international forces are engaged.

Michelle Obama Encourages Chilean Youth to Continue Education

By MacKenzie C Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — First lady Michelle Obama is encouraging

students in Chile to believe in the power of education to change their lives, their country and the world.

"You have everything it takes to succeed. You have the intelligence, you have the passion, you have the courage, you have determination — everything you need to fulfill every last one of your dreams," Obama said March 21 in remarks at a public school in Renca near Santiago, Chile.

"The world will be looking to all of you to make the discoveries and to build the businesses and to heal the divisions that will shape Chile and the world for decades to come," the first lady said.

She was joined by Chilean first lady Cecilia Morel and Minister of Education Joaquín Lavín.

Obama praised the students, calling them "the kind of young people who make me believe that our future is in good hands."

She said building better lives for themselves would not be easy, as anything worth having takes time, effort and determination.

"What does that mean for you?" she asked the students. "Well, it means paying attention in class every day. It means listening to your teachers. It means doing every assignment, and always, always doing your very best."

The first lady shared her own story of growing up in a working-class neighborhood in Chicago.

Although her family did not have much money, Obama said, her parents emphasized the importance of education and were determined to see their children go to college.

"They taught us that if we dreamed big enough and if we worked hard enough, anything was possible," Obama said.

She and her brother went on to graduate from Princeton University, one of the most prestigious colleges in the United States.

"Whether you live in a little apartment in Chicago, or right here in Renca, none of us has to be limited by our circumstances," Obama said.

She said that achieving "big dreams requires big efforts," and she hoped none of the students would give up on accomplishing their goals.

"I hope that you'll continue to work as a community — that you support each other, that you encourage each other, that you help one another as you move up. And if you do that, I can't wait to see all the good that all of you

will do for your country and for our world in the months and years ahead," she said.

The first lady's visit to Chile was part of a three-nation tour of Latin America she began with President Obama March 19. The two first stopped in Brazil and are set to go to El Salvador before returning to Washington March 23.

U.S. Says Haiti's Election Improves on November 2010 Vote

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration says initial assessments of Haiti's second round of presidential and parliamentary elections suggest that the March 20 vote was largely peaceful and free from some of the irregularities that occurred during the first round.

State Department spokesman Mark Toner said March 21 that the vote was "largely peaceful and conducted without significant report of any wrongdoing."

Toner said the United States will wait until its gets the full assessment from election monitors before concluding whether the vote was "free and fair," but said it appears that the second round "took into consideration some of the lessons learned" from the first round that was held November 28, 2010, and was marked by violent demonstrations after charges of irregularities and vote rigging by Haiti's ruling party.

"While there were limited problems with voting supplies in a number of polling stations, most of them appear to have been corrected in a timely fashion, and hours extended at those locations to accommodate all voters," Toner said.

The presidential contest pitted popular singer Michel Martelly against former first lady Mirlande Manigat. Preliminary results are expected to be released March 31, and a final tally is due on April 16.

According to the U.S. Embassy in Port-Au-Prince, more than 40 embassy staff members helped to monitor the vote at polling places around the country. The Obama administration provided \$16 million to support the electoral process, including funding to supply voting materials, Haitian and international election observers, candidate debates and voter information campaigns.

Voters used an SMS texting system and call center supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to find their polling places.

Embassy spokesman Jon Piechowski told the Los Angeles Times March 22 that it had been "a much smoother

election day" than in the first round.

"The Haitian voters arrived at the voting centers much better prepared," he said.

In a March 21 statement, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) congratulated the Haitian people "for the patriotic spirit, calm and discipline which they have shown" during the second round of voting.

"The evident enthusiasm of the electorate is clear evidence of the importance Haitians attach to democracy," it said. MINUSTAH praised the efforts of election authorities to make the runoff credible and allow the popular will to be expressed.

MINUSTAH also urged all candidates and their supporters to "show patience and restraint" as they wait for results to be released, thereby "giving an example of democracy, since it is the future of the country that is at stake."

U.S., World Bank Collaborate to Improve Water Access, Sanitation

By Charlene Porter
Staff Writer

Washington — In a transcontinental commemoration of World Water Day March 22, the United States and the World Bank signed an agreement to energize their efforts to improve developing world access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene.

Audiences in Cape Town, South Africa, and Washington linked via teleconference heard a series of speakers emphasize the urgency of water needs in many parts of the world. More than 800 million people worldwide have no access to an improved water source, and an even greater number, 2.5 billion, have no access to sanitation services.

"The water crisis is a health crisis," said Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton as the keynote speaker at the World Bank's Washington headquarters. "It is a farm crisis, an economic crisis, and increasingly it is a political crisis."

Lack of clean water is a health crisis for thousands of people who die each day from diarrheal diseases, which can be prevented with a sanitary water supply.

The agreement between the United States and the World Bank signed by Clinton and World Bank President Robert Zoellick establishes greater collaboration between the water-focused activities of the two institutions. More than 20 U.S. agencies and departments are engaged in work on water-related issues. Zoellick said the expertise of those

agencies can help improve World Bank programs that provide more than \$5 billion a year in water-development assistance.

"NASA is sharing data with five countries in the Middle East, helping them to manage their water resources," said Zoellick, citing the type of collaboration that can lead to greater progress in water development in other places.

The collaboration will add "the breadth of science to decisionmaking," said Jane Lubchenco, administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, one of the major U.S. agencies involved in water-related research through sub-agencies including the National Weather Service and the National Ocean Service.

With business in 200 countries and a product dependent on clean water supplies, the Coca-Cola Company is also calling for aggressive research on improving water access and purity. Jeff Seabright, vice president for environment and water resources at Coke, said his company is working on 320 projects in 85 countries to produce safe water and sanitation. He said the company is especially keen on improving water access because of the burden women bear in obtaining water for their families.

"In Africa, women and girls spend 40 billion hours a year gathering water," Seabright said. That daily chore prevents girls from going to school and women from doing more productive work. Women and girls leave themselves vulnerable to attackers in this walk for water.

The Coca-Cola Company and the Coca-Cola Africa Foundation announced that they will be devoting \$6 million to improving water and sanitation, affecting some 250,000 women and girls in Africa. A company press release says the program, called RAIN: Water for Africa, should affect women and girls in Algeria, Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda.

The speakers at the World Bank agreed that virtually every development issue is related somehow to adequate and safe water supplies. The secretary of state said these problems need solutions before they become worse.

"By 2025, it could be that two-thirds of the world population will be living under water stress that will undermine and impede socioeconomic development," Clinton said.

A June 2010 report on water-access investments made by the U.S. government cited almost \$775 million earmarked for improving water and sanitation services in 2009. The principle agencies involved in this activity are the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Millennium Challenge Corporation; they are working to

improve supplies, sanitation and hygiene in 57 countries. The agencies estimate that about 5.7 million people got better drinking water and 1.3 million got improved sanitation in 2009 as a result of their actions.

Clinton said she hopes the agreement for greater collaboration between U.S. agencies and the World Bank will work to “drive high-impact change in people’s lives.”

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