

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

March 24, 2011

| | |
|---|---|
| U.S., Japan Strengthen Ties in Disaster Recovery | 1 |
| Secretary Gates Reflects on U.S.-Russian Cooperative Relations..... | 1 |
| U.N.-Mandated No-Fly Zone over Libya Successfully Established..... | 2 |
| Secretary Clinton on Bombing in Jerusalem..... | 3 |

U.S., Japan Strengthen Ties in Disaster Recovery

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says U.S.-Japanese relations are stronger than ever as the two countries work together to speed recovery from the devastating March 11 earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan along its northeast coastline.

“This unprecedented disaster has produced unprecedented cooperation between our countries,” Clinton said in an interview March 22 with Japanese public broadcaster NHK. “Our alliance, which was already strong and enduring, has become even more so.”

The United States has supported Japan’s recovery through humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions.

The U.S. military has played a major role in providing aid as part of Operation Tomodachi, a word meaning “friendship” in Japanese. U.S. Marines and sailors performed a beach landing survey at a possible site for additional humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations March 21. The surveyors, part of a combat logistics battalion, are responsible for noncombatant evacuation operations and helicopter support team missions. The team will employ its heavy equipment assets to remove debris from roads and other locations.

The U.S. Navy has moved several tons of materials to Japanese civilians in the hardest struck areas. According to a March 23 news release, sailors on the USS McCampbell worked in near-freezing temperatures to move 45 pallets of food, fuel and other basic supplies to victims on shore — more than three times the normal amount of supplies loaded to support humanitarian and disaster relief efforts.

“Sailors have been working tirelessly to ensure that all available resources are getting ashore in a timely manner since arriving on scene March 11,” the release said.

The ship is set to remain on the scene to provide assistance as part of the overall humanitarian effort being conducted by the U.S. Navy’s 7th Fleet.

Commander Steven DeMoss of the USS McCampbell called the efforts a “tremendous commitment by our nation and our Navy to ensure Japan overcomes and recovers from this tragedy.”

Clinton expressed confidence in the resilience of the Japanese people, and said Japan will recover, rebuild and “come back even stronger for the future.”

She said the United States has been supporting Japan through humanitarian work, recovery efforts, financial assistance and consultations with U.S. experts from a variety of fields. Clinton pledged continued U.S. support.

“We will be your partner and your friend for years to come as you rebuild from this terrible disaster,” she said. “I want the Japanese people to know that the American people support you and we will be there, not just now but in the months and years ahead.”

Secretary Gates Reflects on U.S.-Russian Cooperative Relations

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Reflecting on current relations between Russia and the United States, Defense Secretary Robert Gates says the two former Cold War foes have come a very long way, and in a real sense the relationship can be defined by a single word: cooperation.

“I think if you look at the areas where we are cooperating and the kind of dialogue that we’re having with the Russians, we have come quite a distance,” said Gates, who was in Russia for three days of consultations. It may well be his last official visit to Moscow and St. Petersburg, because he has announced plans to retire from government service this year.

“It’s a lot different than it was in 1966, let me tell you,” he told reporters at the start of his trip to Moscow March 20. Gates began his government career as an analyst with the Central Intelligence Agency 45 years ago, served on the U.S. National Security Council, and went on to become director of Central Intelligence and serve as the secretary of defense under two presidents: Republican George W. Bush and now Democrat Barack Obama.

Gates said there is a single fact “that continues to amaze me” about the U.S.-Russian relationship.

“Russia is an integral part of the northern distribution network for supporting our operations in Afghanistan,” he said. “At this point we have probably sent more than 30,000 containers across Russia. Russia’s willingness to work with us in this I think is really extraordinary.”

“And then you add it to the things we’re doing together on counterterrorism, counternarcotics, the fact that they have cooperated and supported the efforts on the [U.N.] Security Council resolutions with respect to both North Korea and Iran, I think are very important,” Gates said. “So I think there’s a broad area of cooperation here that is really important.”

Gates noted that there are also differences, such as over

human rights issues in Russia and some questions of law, and some debate about a proposed missile-defense system for Europe.

But for Russia and the United States, two nations that once faced off with sizeable nuclear arsenals and massive armies that were separated only by a thin geographic line across Europe, the relationship is still developing, he said. It's the kind of geopolitical relationship — like the one the United States enjoys with close allies like Britain or France or Germany — that eventually will be able to withstand almost anything and not be derailed by individual events, he said.

"I would say we're probably not there yet, but it's not nearly as it was 30 years ago in terms of a single event," Gates said. "And partly I think it's because, particularly over the last couple [or] three years, both sides have been sensitive to the value of the relationship and there's been good communication."

Even the brief August 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia over the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia did not derail a number of things that were going on in the bilateral relationship, he said.

At the Kuznetsov Naval Academy in St. Petersburg March 21, Gates told naval officers that he visited St. Petersburg in 1992 as director of the CIA to explore with the head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, Yevgeny Primakov, opportunities for the American and Russian intelligence services to cooperate in addressing common security threats in the immediate post-Cold War period, such as terrorism, weapons proliferation, global organized crime and narcotics trafficking.

"Nearly 20 years later, that cooperation to address common security challenges is real, and increasingly involves our two militaries working together," Gates told the students. He advised the students that military organizations of the 21st century must be adaptable enough to face the threats along an entire spectrum of conflict, not just the traditional military confrontations between nations. This new relationship is part of a broader effort by the two nations to strengthen relations and enhance mutual respect, he said.

Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov told reporters at a March 22 joint press conference that Russia and the United States, at the behest of their presidents, have been carrying out stepped up contacts.

"The major emphasis was put on practical measures, which could be applied to armed forces reform," Serdyukov said. "Both of our countries are engaged in this work; therefore, sharing experience in this sphere and discussing this sphere would be very useful, both for us

and our U.S. counterparts."

Serdyukov said he and Gates spent considerable time discussing a proposed plan by the United States to develop a missile-defense shield for Europe, specifically for NATO allies, though the United States has offered to include Russia in the system. Serdyukov said that after the 2010 Lisbon NATO Summit and the meeting of the NATO-Russia Council, they have worked to share views on a missile-defense system and have developed a common understanding that "cooperation is better than confrontation."

"And discussions will be continued by our experts in the special work group," Serdyukov told reporters.

"Although we still have differences that need to be resolved," Gates said, "we continue to make progress, both within a bilateral framework and exploring opportunities to cooperate through the NATO-Russia Council."

After his meetings in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Gates traveled to Cairo for consultations with Egyptian Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, who is chief of Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which assumed control of the country following President Hosni Mubarak's resignation. Gates was expected to encourage the peaceful transition to a democratic, civilian-led government, according to Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell.

U.N.-Mandated No-Fly Zone over Libya Successfully Established

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says international coalition forces have successfully established the no-fly zone over Libya that was called for under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973, and a U.S. military official reports that the majority of air sorties over Libya now are being carried out by non-U.S. aircraft.

Addressing reporters after meeting with Moroccan Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi-Fihri in Washington March 23, Clinton said that in less than a week since coalition military operations began, "significant progress" has been made toward enforcement of the U.N. measure, which was designed to protect Libyan civilians from the forces of Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi.

"Qadhafi's troops were poised to enter Benghazi over the weekend, putting hundreds of thousands of civilians in that city of 700,000 at great risk," Clinton said. "Today, those troops have been pushed back, and those civilians are safer as a result," she added. The coalition also has

“downgraded Qadhafi’s air defense capabilities and set the conditions for an effective no-fly zone.”

The secretary said that because the international community took action, “many, many Libyans are safer today.”

The Obama administration is working to transfer command and control of the military action, known as Operation Odyssey Dawn, to its partners in NATO, and to diminish its role into one of support for the European and Arab members of the coalition as they enforce the no-fly zone.

U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Gerard Hueber spoke by telephone to reporters March 23 from the USS Mount Whitney in the Mediterranean Sea, and said coalition air forces “are now flying 55 percent” of the air sorties. The number is a dramatic increase from March 20, when non-U.S. aircraft were accounting for 15 percent of the flights, he said.

The no-fly zone has now been established over the Libyan coastal areas from Libya’s eastern boundary with Egypt to its western border with Tunisia, Hueber said. “We have no confirmed flight activity by regime air forces over the past 24 hours,” he said.

He said that since military operations began on March 19, much of Qadhafi’s air forces has been either “destroyed or rendered inoperable,” his surface-to-air missile systems have been degraded down to “a negligible threat,” and his air defense system elements are believed to be “severely degraded or destroyed.”

In addition, Hueber said there have been “no reports” that the coalition’s activities have inflicted civilian casualties. “Our mission here is to protect the civilian populace. And we choose our targets and plan our actions with that as a top priority,” he said.

Although coalition action has forced Qadhafi’s forces to leave Benghazi, troops loyal to Qadhafi continue to attack and threaten Libyan civilians in other areas, which he said places them “in clear violation” of U.N. Resolution 1973, which calls on them to observe a cease-fire, completely end their attacks on civilians and allow humanitarian assistance to reach the Libyan people.

“There is widespread reporting indicating Libyan ground forces are engaged in fighting in a number of cities, including Ajdabiya and Misurata, and they are threatening a number of others, putting innocent civilians in grave danger,” Hueber said. In Misurata and Ajdabiya, Qadhafi’s forces “are targeting population centers specifically” with tanks, artillery and rocket launchers, he added.

Coalition aircraft are targeting Qadhafi’s mechanized forces, artillery and mobile surface-to-air missile sites in an effort to “interdict those forces before they enter the city, cut off their lines of communication and cut off their command and control,” he said.

He said the coalition is “not targeting Qadhafi” himself, but is focused on the mission to uphold the U.N. resolution, “which includes protecting Libyan civilians and enforcing of the no-fly zone.”

Secretary Clinton on Bombing in Jerusalem

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
March 23, 2011

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY
RODHAM CLINTON

Bombing in Jerusalem

This morning I was shocked and deeply saddened to learn of the bombing in Jerusalem today that took at least one life and injured innocent civilians. Terrorism and the targeting of civilians are never justified. And Israel, like all nations, of course, has to respond when this occurs. The United States is committed to Israel’s security and we strongly condemn this violence and extend our deepest sympathies to all those affected.

We also strongly condemn recent rocket attacks from Gaza against innocent Israeli civilians and hold fully responsible the militants perpetrating these attacks. And I join President Obama in extending our sincere condolences to the friends and families of the Palestinian civilians killed in Gaza yesterday and appreciate that Israel has expressed regret.

We stress the importance of calm and we urge all concerned to do everything in their power to prevent further violence and civilian casualties among both Israelis and Palestinians. Violence only erodes hope for a lasting and meaningful peace and the final realization of two states for two peoples.

(Preceding items distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://america.gov>)