

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Secretary Clinton Statement on Attack on U.N. Compound in Afghanistan

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
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STATEMENT BY SECRETARY CLINTON

Attack on UN in Afghanistan

I am shocked and saddened by the attack today on the compound of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Mazar-e-Sharif. There is no justification for this atrocity and I join President Obama in condemning this violence in the strongest possible terms.

On behalf of the United States, I offer my deepest condolences to the families of the victims, Special Representative Staffan de Mistura, and his UNAMA colleagues. The United Nations staff killed were in Afghanistan to help the Afghan people build a better future.

The United Nations has stood by the Afghan people for more than fifty years. They have saved countless lives and delivered essential food and supplies. They are a force for peace, progress and stability in Afghanistan and throughout the world.

The United States strongly supports UNAMA and its mission and we will continue to stand together for a more peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

U.S. Prepositioning Aid Supplies for Besieged Libyan Areas

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington – The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) says that adequate supplies of food, water and medicine are being delivered to people in eastern areas of Libya, but international relief organizations are not able to ascertain the situation in areas still under siege by forces loyal to Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi.

USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator Mark Ward told reporters in Washington April 1 that USAID and others in the international community are prepositioning humanitarian supplies so that when they are able to gain access to besieged areas, such as the city of Misrata, they will be able to rapidly assess the needs and provide assistance.

“The humanitarian assistance challenge is always formidable. It is particularly difficult in Libya because of the security situation,” Ward said. Within Libya, the situation varies, he said.

In eastern areas not under siege, “the Libyan people are coping very well, given the situation they face,” with sufficient levels of humanitarian supplies and support, he said.

“Sadly, that is not the case in cities further to the west, where the pro-Qadhafi forces have cut off or are bombarding a city, such as Misrata,” he said.

Ward said USAID is concerned about those areas and is anticipating massive civilian casualties, but “we don’t have good visibility yet about what the situation is inside.” USAID has been receiving anecdotal reports from people leaving those areas, he said, and it has been difficult to get anything into those areas because of the security situation.

Until personnel and supplies can safely enter those areas, “it will be impossible for us or for any other part of the international community to get in and assess the situation and provide assistance,” he said.

“I can assure you that the international community – the United States, Turkey, Great Britain, the United Nations – we are all as close as we can safely be right now and ready to help when the situation stabilizes from a security point of view,” Ward said.

In the meantime, USAID is prepositioning food and medical supplies “so that when we get access to those cities ... we will have them there; they will be ready to go and move in quickly,” he said. The agency similarly anticipated gaining access to Ajdabiya after pro-Qadhafi forces left the area, and as a result it was able to quickly respond to the city’s medical needs.

“The medical situation in Ajdabiya right now is quite stable as a result. I think, in large part, that the international community had prepositioned supplies there and medical personnel to go in and help,” Ward said.

According to a March 31 USAID fact sheet, the United States so far has provided \$47 million in humanitarian assistance to Libya. The total includes emergency supplies such as blankets, plastic sheeting, water containers, health and trauma kits, and food assistance. According to the fact sheet, \$27 million of the U.S. assistance has come from the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration to assist Libyans and foreign nationals who fled the country for camps in Tunisia and Egypt. In addition, U.S. military aircraft have transported 1,158

Egyptians from Tunisia to Egypt in an operation that cost nearly \$1.1 million.

The fact sheet also said USAID has funded the training of 32 medical volunteers in Tobruk through the World Health Organization to perform first aid and transport injured individuals. The program aims to "improve the ability of hospital staff and volunteers to stabilize and evacuate severe cases from overstretched hospitals in eastern Libya to facilities in Egypt, freeing emergency room space, beds, and hospital staff in conflict-affected areas to receive and treat new arrivals," the fact sheet said.

U.S. Officials Say Drug Crime Requires Greater Regional Effort

By Jeff Baron
Staff Writer

Washington — U.S. officials are pledging intensive efforts to counter drug-related crime in what has become the most dangerous region of the world: Latin America.

Assistant Secretary of State William R. Brownfield told a Senate foreign relations subcommittee March 31 that the efforts are increasing particularly in Central America, which faces "the most emergent threat in the hemisphere."

"Ironically, Central America is a victim of our successes in Colombia," Brownfield said. "As we disrupted narcotics shipping routes from the north coast of South America, the traffickers moved networks to the Central American isthmus. There, they found weak government institutions and willing partners in the local gangs. All of Central America is caught in this unholy vise of drugs and gangs."

Meanwhile, he said, the United States and Mexico have been making progress under what is known as the Merida Initiative to attack the drug traffickers who have greatly increased violent crime rates in Mexico. "Our challenge, I suggest, is to deliver sufficient support, equipment and results so that citizens on both sides of the border see the value of Merida and the bipartisan political consensus that maintains it," he said.

Brownfield also warned that progress against drug traffickers in Central America and Mexico will push more of their operations to the Caribbean. "We have seen this movie before," he said. "Our strategic challenge is to build infrastructure in the Caribbean to discourage their return."

Senator Robert Menendez (Democrat-New Jersey), the subcommittee's chairman, also focused on the urgent

problem in Central America. "Our successes through Plan Colombia, while significant, failed to take into account the ability of the market to find new avenues to both move its product and new territories to infiltrate," he said. "However, the successes we achieved in Colombia through close bilateral cooperation demonstrated that it is possible to take on the drug-trafficking organizations and to achieve success. The recipe for victory, in my mind, is clear: Our efforts must be shouldered jointly, recognizing a shared responsibility to address supply and demand for narcotics."

Vanda Felbab-Brown, a Brookings Institution scholar who has studied the war on drugs in Latin America, said in written testimony that "with the exception of Colombia, criminal activity throughout the region has exploded." Latin America accounts for most of the world's kidnappings, she said, and the murder rates are among the highest in the world.

R. Gil Kerlikowske, the U.S. national drug control policy director, said his office is developing a comprehensive Western Hemisphere strategy for contending with the demand for and the production and shipment of drugs. Like others, he cited Colombia as a developing success story. Because of that success, he said, cocaine and heroin production has been drastically reduced, and cocaine being sold in the United States is more expensive and less pure.

U.S. Global HIV/AIDS Coordinator on Peace Corps Volunteers

The following commentary by the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Eric Goosby was posted on DipNote, the U.S. State Department's official blog, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps. It is in the public domain, and there are no republication restrictions.

Dip Note

The official blog of the U.S. Department of State

Peace Corps Volunteers Are Leaders in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS By Ambassador Eric Goosby, United States Global AIDS Coordinator

This month marks the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps, and I would like to thank the thousands of volunteers who have responded to the HIV/AIDS crisis, one of the most serious threats to global health and development. The Peace Corps is a key partner and implementer of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which is working around the globe to save lives and promote a more secure world.

When PEPFAR was announced in 2003, Peace Corps was

recognized as a key partner in the U.S. government's response to the global AIDS pandemic. Today, nearly 2,500 volunteers are working on PEPFAR-supported HIV programs in 46 countries. Many Peace Corps volunteers work on HIV education initiatives during their service. The Peace Corps currently trains all volunteers who serve in Africa, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia to be advocates and educators for HIV prevention, care, and support.

Volunteers will continue to be first responders in local communities, dealing with the unfolding tragedies in the villages where they serve. Volunteers' "can do" attitudes mean that they find ways to "make do." Where others may see a lack of resources, Peace Corps volunteers see a challenge and they respond with creative solutions. They contribute a clear understanding of what really works to fight the spread of disease and alleviate suffering.

Peace Corps volunteers help communities affected by HIV through work with businesses, community organizations, and non-governmental organizations, and through efforts in areas such as public health education. While volunteers do not provide direct medical services, they are important partners in directing people to HIV programs and helping them to stay in care.

Volunteers also provide critical support by working with communities to reduce risks that contribute to the spread of HIV. They speak with communities and lead by example. Volunteers encourage HIV testing, teach about nutrition, and help to reduce stigma and discrimination. Due to their compassion and leadership in helping those affected by HIV, Peace Corps volunteers are often accepted as members of the communities in which they work. Volunteers quickly come to think of these communities as family.

In my travels, I am invariably impressed by the energy, passion and out-of-the-box thinking that volunteers bring to their work in HIV. During my recent visit to Botswana, I had the pleasure of meeting with Peace Corps volunteers who are working in health district offices, clinics, and schools to support the leadership of local communities in responding to HIV/AIDS. Their leadership is helping to save lives and promote a more secure world.

As we focus PEPFAR programs on supporting countries as they work to improve the health of their own people, Peace Corps and its dedicated volunteers will continue to be vital to our success in building capacity and promoting a lasting response. I salute Peace Corps on the occasion of their 50th anniversary and welcome their continued contributions to PEPFAR and U.S. global health efforts.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov>)