

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## U.S. Maintains Enduring, Consistent Commitment to Asia

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — Even in times of change and competing global demands, the United States will maintain its enduring and consistent commitment to Asia and its security, Defense Secretary Robert Gates says.

“Under President Obama that engagement has not only been sustained, it has been broadened and enhanced in a variety of ways,” Gates said at the 10th annual Shangri-La Dialogue June 4 in Singapore. It was Gates’ fifth consecutive appearance at the annual regional security conference sponsored by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies. The conference is named for the hotel where it’s held.

Gates said the annual meeting was held at a time of significant challenges for the United States at home and abroad, and when questions are being raised about the credibility of its commitments around the world.

Conducting two protracted and costly military operations, in Iraq and Afghanistan, has strained the U.S. military’s ground forces and worn down America’s appetite for similar interventions, Gates acknowledged. And the United States is emerging slowly from a serious recession at a time of growing debt that puts pressure on the U.S. defense budget.

Those are some of the realities the United States faces, he said, and they are vitally important to the American people. But irrespective of tough times, the United States’ interest as a Pacific nation will endure.

“The United States and Asia will only become more inextricably linked over the course of this century,” Gates said.

Gates noted that with this visit to Singapore, he has made 14 trips to Asia in the four and a half years he’s been the defense secretary; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton will embark on her eighth trip to Asia in July; and President Obama has traveled to Asia each year he has been in office.

On June 3, Gates met with China’s minister for national defense, General Liang Guanglie. They met on the sidelines of the security conference for about an hour to further develop military-to-military relations between the two nations.

U.S. engagement with Asia is based on four vital principles:

- Free and open commerce.
- A just international order that emphasizes rights and responsibilities of nations and fidelity to the rule of law.
- Open access by all to the global commons of sea, air, space and now cyberspace.
- Resolving conflict without the use of force.

Gates cited the enduring commitment to Japan following World War II and a rapid response to Japan following the devastating earthquake and tsunami March 11; the U.S. alliance with South Korea to strengthen security on the Korean Peninsula; and the U.S.-Vietnam partnership on a range of issues that includes trade and investment, education and health, and security and defense.

Gates said the United States is “also now working together with China to build a positive, cooperative and comprehensive relationship. In that effort, we are seeing the fruits of bold decisions by three American presidents in the 1970s, Republicans and Democrats, to build a rapport between the two nations that ultimately resulted in the normalization of relations in 1979.”

Also remarkable, Gates said, is the transformation in the U.S.-India relationship over the past decade to a partnership based on shared democratic values and vital economic and security interests — one that “will be an indispensable pillar of stability in South Asia and beyond.”

While building nation-to-nation relations has been critical, the United States has also worked on multilateral cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and in other venues.

Gates is retiring from U.S. government service later in June, and CIA Director Leon Panetta has been named by Obama to succeed Gates. A Senate confirmation hearing with Panetta is scheduled for June 9.

## Secretary Clinton Launches Initiative to Empower Women Through Sports

By MacKenzie C. Babb  
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has launched the Women’s World Cup Initiative, which “brings together international exchanges and sports to empower women and girls” around the world, according to a State Department press release.

The event brought to Washington 18 young female soccer players, their coaches and administrators, who traveled

from Bolivia, Germany, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories and South Africa for a 10-day exchange as part of the new initiative's sports visitors program.

The Women's World Cup Initiative will be led by the State Department's SportsUnited Office. The initiative will expand existing SportsUnited sports visitors programs. In addition, it will also increase SportsUnited's work in women's sports management programs, which allow for 10-day international exchanges and for sports management professionals "to exchange ideas and best practices" with their American counterparts.

The initiative includes a sports envoy program, which sends current and retired professional athletes abroad to conduct drills, lead team-building activities and "engage youth in a dialogue on the importance of education, positive health practices and respect for diversity," the release said. Since 2005, SportsUnited has sent more than 130 U.S. athletes to more than 40 countries.

Clinton said she hoped that "as we celebrate our sports exchanges, we'll encourage even more people to get behind women and girls in sports and to give young women a chance to compete on the playing field, to discharge that incredible energy that they want to put into being the best they can be." In remarks from the State Department June 6, the secretary called on countries around the world to continue giving women opportunities to live up to their potential in every way.

The launch of the program comes ahead of the 40th anniversary of Title IX, a landmark U.S. law that offers equal opportunity for men and women in athletics as well as academics.

Clinton credited the legislation for having "literally leveled the playing field" in the United States, as "sports programs teach girls of every income level and ethnic background about leadership, teamwork, supporting one another." She said Title IX is serving as a model for people around the world as other countries work to pass similar laws.

She said sports symbolize "so much of what we see in the world," a sentiment echoed by the State Department's press office.

"Athletic programs for women and girls promote leadership, teamwork, respect, self-awareness and life skills," the office said in a June 6 release, adding that sports and recreation programs can have an especially effective impact on at-risk and underserved youth.

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