

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Secretary Clinton Says Syria's Assad Has Lost Legitimacy

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton condemned Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime for failing to protect U.S. and French diplomatic facilities in Damascus and said the Syrian leader "has lost legitimacy" because of his violent response to legitimate Syrian aspirations for greater freedom.

Speaking with European Union (EU) High Representative Catherine Ashton at the State Department July 11, Clinton said U.S. officials have spoken with their Syrian counterparts to demand that Syria honor the Vienna Convention, which requires countries to protect foreign diplomats and properties, after several days of attacks by Syrian mobs against U.S. and French facilities.

Clinton said the Assad regime will not succeed in using the attacks on diplomatic facilities to deflect global attention from "the real story unfolding in Syria" and the nearly four months of peaceful protests by its people who have been calling for reforms.

"This is not about America or France or any other country. This is about the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people for dignity, universal rights and the rule of law," Clinton said.

The violence, arrests and intimidation against the Syrian people "must stop," the secretary said, and neither they nor the international community will accept "half measures or lofty speeches" from the Assad regime.

Assad "is not indispensable" and the United States has "absolutely nothing invested in him remaining in power," she said. "Our goal is to see that the will of the Syrian people for a democratic transformation occurs."

The Syrian leader "has failed to deliver on the promises he's made. He has sought and accepted aid from the Iranians as to how to repress his own people," Clinton said. She called on more countries in the international community to speak out "as forcefully as we have."

Ashton said the EU is trying to use its collective political and economic power to get Assad to turn away from violence. She described the situation of Syrian refugees who have fled the unrest for Turkey as "very grave indeed." Their accounts reflect information that international news media, which have been unable to report from inside Syria, have been receiving.

The EU representative called for an end to the violence, for the Syrian people to have their voices heard, and for

them to then be allowed to make the decisions about how their country should move forward.

Space Shuttle Delivers Spare Parts, Equipment, Food, Supplies

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington — The space shuttle Atlantis is living up to the nickname given this class of spacecraft 30 years ago.

The "space truck" safely delivered a huge cargo cache to the International Space Station July 11. The work of unpacking almost 4,100 kilograms of spare parts, equipment, food and other supplies begins.

Atlantis is carrying a year's worth of supplies for the International Space Station (ISS) because the shuttle fleet is going into retirement after 135 trips into orbit. Other partners in the ISS — space agencies from Japan, Russia and the European Union — have all developed unmanned cargo vehicles for delivering future supplies and equipment to the ISS.

NASA is working with private companies to develop a commercial capability for trips to the space station. This plan, according to agency documents, allows NASA to concentrate on the next chapter in human space exploration.

"As NASA charts a new course to send humans deeper into space than ever before, we are stimulating efforts within the private sector to develop and operate safe, reliable and affordable commercial space transportation systems." This statement fronts a NASA website devoted to the space agency's commercialization efforts and partnerships.

While steps are made on Earth toward that goal, the Atlantis crew has a lot of unpacking and packing to do. That 4,100 kilograms of gear rode up to the ISS in a seven-meter-long module they call Raffaello, which was lifted out of the shuttle's cargo bay and then bolted to the ISS.

Shuttle crew members will spend nearly 130 person-hours over the next several days transferring items from Raffaello into the station, and then repacking the cargo module with more than 2,500 kilograms of discarded station gear for return to Earth.

Among the gear arriving on the ISS is an experiment whose results could be critical to long-term human space flight, and important to people on Earth today who struggle with osteoporosis or frequent bone fractures.

Science has long known that long-term stays in the microgravity environment of space cause significant bone loss in astronauts. Scientists are counting on 30 mice they

have sent to space to help them better understand this bone loss at a biochemical level. The experiment is being run by a consortium including Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, NASA's Ames Research Center in California and others.

The scientific team injected half the spacebound mice with an antibody that blocks action of the protein sclerostin. It is thought that sclerostin inhibits bone growth, so shutting down that mechanism may prevent the skeletal deterioration.

"When the mice come back from space [after the 12-day flight], we hope to learn what the effects of microgravity are on the skeleton and on the muscle," says scientist Mary Bouxsein, an assistant professor of orthopedic surgery at Harvard Medical School. "We also want to find out if this new type of therapy will be able to counteract those profound effects and actually promote bone gain in a microgravity environment."

The experiment is one of many sent to space over the life of the shuttle program. Building the returnable craft pushed NASA to make tremendous advances in space flight technologies, but the shuttle has also served as a unique laboratory for many experiments that have led to discoveries in medicine, biology, astronomy and Earth sciences.

"We have learned about our planet, its land mass, its oceans, its atmosphere and its environment as a whole," according to a space shuttle history compiled by NASA. "With the help of the shuttle we have learned more about our moon, solar system, our galaxy and our universe."

Atlantis is set to return to Earth July 20, which will mark the end of the space shuttle era.

Native American Tribal Dances Move Central Asians

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer

Washington — Buffalo Big Mountain, whose mother is from the Mohawk nation of the northeastern United States and whose father is Comanche of the southwestern plains, always has his Plains regalia and drums ready to go.

Big Mountain identifies with his father's tribe and has had his self-made regalia about 25 years, continually adding and taking off parts. He added a new piece just before going to Kazakhstan to perform recently. His bustle, worn on the back, is made of the feathers of birds of prey, usually eagle feathers. Every color and pattern represents something related to battle. Two shafts at the top of the bustle represent war arrows.

"No two bustles are alike," he said. "The feathers you

earn throughout your life are like military medals." His headdress is made of porcupine and deer hair topped with two eagle feathers.

Recently, the 48-year-old Native American took his colorful regalia, drums and a couple of relatives to four cities in Kazakhstan. Big Mountain, his sister Teresa White Dove, and nephew Sebastian Snowsnake performed traditional American Indian dances and talked about their culture at schools, theaters and stadiums. Snowsnake performed the hoop dance, using as many as 30 hoops to create shapes representing living things like butterflies, turtles, eagles, flowers and snakes.

Nature is dominant in Big Mountain's life; he works as a land surveyor in Ashton, Wisconsin. "I'm outside every day. I definitely enjoy the outdoors," he said.

But dance is equally important. Big Mountain learned traditional dances, like the eagle dance, at a young age from his father. His father learned from Big Mountain's grandfather.

"We all dance," he said of his extended family, whose members are spread across America. "We all ... promote a better understanding of our culture."

Since 2002, Big Mountain has performed outside the United States many times. He, his wife, Mary, and children — Sage and Zander Kicking Horse — performed in Uzbekistan in 2009 while Mary worked at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. The Big Mountain family performed 20 times around the country that year.

In October 2010, Big Mountain, Snowsnake and extended family members Bluejay Littlejohn and White Wolf Big Mountain performed in three cities in Tajikistan at the invitation of the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe.

After performing social dances and dances that tell stories, the performers answer audience questions. Audience members often comment on the similarities of their own and their visitors' traditional drums. Big Mountain recommends elk and deer skin stretched over a hardwood frame to create the best drum. He and his fellow dancers also typically correct misperceptions about Native Americans created by early Hollywood films.

The trips to the three Central Asian countries were funded through the State Department's speaker program.

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