

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

July 13, 2011

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Foreign Aid Supports U.S. Economic Growth, Secretary Clinton Says

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton is advocating that U.S. development assistance should receive equal stature in U.S. foreign policy with defense and diplomacy, and she asked the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC) to support her in nudging policymakers in that direction.

Speaking at a USGLC conference in Washington on July 12, Clinton said development supports foreign policy in two recognized ways: Helping poor nations rise from poverty to achieve their potential is a moral imperative, and prospering nations are less likely to slip into chaos or lawlessness and endanger security. Besides these two reasons, Clinton sees a clear economic reason for wealthy nations to help poor ones.

“The growth of the developing world presents a major economic opportunity for American business today and a thousand opportunities tomorrow,” Clinton said.

The secretary of state said two clear historical examples demonstrate how financial returns can flow from investments to help other nations regain stability and prosperity in the aftermath of war. The United States contributed tremendous levels of aid to help rebuild Europe after World War II and South Korea after the Korean War. Today, both are major trading partners, each year buying U.S. exports worth far more than the initial investments.

Foreign consumption of U.S. exports strengthens U.S. industry, creates jobs and pushes renewal of a U.S. economy slow to pull out of recession, Clinton said. She said the State Department’s commercial service is working to expand opportunities and lower regulatory barriers so that U.S. companies can compete abroad and expand their markets. She urged U.S. business leaders to rise to that challenge.

“We urge American companies to roll up their sleeves, get out there and engage with the economic opportunities that are emerging across the world,” Clinton said. “This is a moment to lean forward and take the kind of informed risks that have led to some of our greatest successes.”

USGLC members come from a broad cross section of U.S. businesses, institutions and nongovernmental organizations who believe in “the smart power approach of elevating diplomacy and development alongside defense in order to build a better, safer world,” according to its website.

USGLC released a study July 12 analyzing how leadership by the U.S. government abroad can help support economic development at home. In accord with Clinton’s message, the report finds that the developing world will give rise to hundreds of millions of additional consumers eager to buy American products.

“Clearly, these emerging and developing markets are central to the future of American economic prosperity,” the report says. “American businesses need a wide array of available tools to succeed in these new environments, and the international affairs budget is one of the most cost-effective tools we have to help our economy grow.”

USGLC presents this study at a time when support for the international affairs budget is weak in some quarters. When budgetary shortfalls demand cutbacks, as they do today, foreign aid allocations can be among the first targeted for reduction by the public and some politicians. Advocates of that strategy also frequently inflate the actual amount of the budget that is devoted to foreign aid, which amounts to about 1 percent, or less, of the entire U.S. budget.

A prominent group under the USGLC umbrella is Veterans for Smart Power. The group has built a base of about 16,000 supporters in the last year alone with its message that diplomacy and civilian assistance are critical to U.S. engagement with other countries.

Mullen Discusses U.S.-China Relations with Beijing Students

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.

Washington – The chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, told Chinese university students that one of the ways to increase openness and security, and ensure better stability between the United States and China, is to build more substantive relationships between the two militaries.

“What we have learned over time is that one of the best ways to credibly change the problem of judging intentions is through deep, broad and continuous military-to-military engagement,” Mullen said in a speech July 10 at Beijing’s Renmin University of China.

“As President Obama has said, the relationship between the United States and China will shape the 21st century, which makes it as important as any bilateral relationship in the world, and I could not agree more,” Mullen said. In 2009, Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao called for expanded military-to-military contacts as part of an effort to expand the relationship between the two nations.

Mullen is visiting China at the invitation of the chief of

the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army, General Chen Bingde, who visited the United States in May. He has participated in a discussion with Chinese journalists, visited with military leaders and viewed a CSS-7 short-range ballistic missile on a mobile launcher at the 2nd Artillery Force headquarters.

Seeking a sustained and reliable relationship between militaries is not unusual, Mullen told students. Mullen keeps an active schedule of regular military visits around the world and talks routinely with his counterparts about issues, both urgent and less so. Miscalculation and miscommunication most often occur, he said, in times of crisis, and so constant dialogue is a vital element of good relations.

"It is crisis which most often reveals the true character of a government and a military," Mullen said.

He said a relationship improves when military-to-military talks can expand cooperation where interests converge and provide at least some context in areas where there are differences. High-level visits like this one to China are important and should continue, Mullen said, but they are only the beginning.

"Over time it is just as important that our younger military officers meet and get to know each other so that they can begin to develop relationships that I hope will last decades, and that our military can actually operate together in exercises and joint activities," Mullen told students.

Mullen noted that current military maritime consultative agreement working groups will meet in China and at the U.S. Pacific Command in Hawaii later in 2011 to build cooperation. The two navies plan to participate in joint counterpiracy exercises in the Gulf of Aden by the end of 2011.

Senior military medical exchanges between China and the United States will be hosted in Washington as well as in Hawaii and Texas, with plans for a joint military medical exercise in the future, Mullen said.

"And future humanitarian assistance and disaster relief exchanges, as well as joint exercises, are expected to take place in 2012," Mullen told the university students.

Mullen offered three areas for both nations to build on:

- Work from a posture of mutual respect.
- Think locally and globally, for the local issues that impact the region often have global implications.
- Adopt a view of looking to the future in U.S.-China relations, not to the past.

U.S. Condemns Violence by Syrian Government

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer

Washington — The Syrian government "continues to carry out a pattern of gross human rights violations despite promises to stop," U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Michael Posner said July 12.

In prepared testimony before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the U.S. House of Representatives, Posner said the United States wants to see that the democratic transition that is the will of the Syrian people occurs.

The commission is holding hearings into widespread reports of human rights violations in Syria by the government of President Bashar al-Assad, who has ruled the Middle Eastern nation for 11 years in a family that has held power for nearly four decades.

Large-scale demonstrations erupted in mid-March in the southern town of Daraa after security forces fired on Syrians who were calling for the release of children being held for weeks for writing political graffiti, he said. That act sparked peaceful demonstrations by Syrians across the country, which are now entering their fourth month.

"President Assad and his regime responded to the Syrian people's peaceful protests with gunfire, mass arrests, torture and abuse," Posner said. Human rights organizations report that between 1,300 and 1,600 Syrians have been killed, thousands jailed, and the Syrian people are held hostage to a widening crackdown by security forces.

Posner, who heads the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, said Syrians responded to the government's crackdown by taking to the streets to demand freedom, respect for human rights and a transition to democracy. But the Syrian military and security forces have besieged communities across the nation, cut off water, Internet and telephone services, conducted mass arrests, targeted emergency medical responders and shot peaceful protesters.

On July 7, U.S. Ambassador Robert Ford visited the central city of Hama, where for six weeks demonstrators have been protesting through peaceful dissent. Ford reported that in that two-day visit to Hama, he saw no protesters carrying weapons, and he did not report seeing any damage to government buildings.

In addition, civilian protesters have not attacked soldiers or government officials during the widespread protests, Posner said.

"Ambassador Ford traveled to Hama to demonstrate our

solidarity with the people of the city and our firm support for their right to assemble and express themselves peacefully," Posner said.

On July 11 a mob in Damascus assaulted the U.S. Embassy. They smashed windows, threw rocks, raised the Syrian flag and scrawled graffiti on walls, he said.

The mob then moved to the French Embassy, whose ambassador had also visited Hama, Posner said. The United States views these incidents as further evidence that Assad's government "continues to be the real source of instability within Syria."

The 15-member U.N. Security Council on July 12 unanimously condemned the attacks on the U.S. and French embassies, saying they violated a long-standing treaty among nations to protect diplomatic missions.

Since the protests began, the United States has condemned the violent responses by the Syrian government and has imposed sanctions against Assad and senior officials of the government that have been responsible for human rights violations. And during a special session in April, the U.N. Human Rights Council condemned the ongoing rights violations by the Syrian authorities, Posner said.

Quartet Urges Israel, Palestinians to Overcome Obstacles to Talks

Washington – Representatives of Russia, the European Union, the United Nations and the United States, collectively known as the Quartet, urged Israel and the Palestinians to begin "a preparatory phase" of peace talks and to narrow their differences on outstanding issues, pledging to help facilitate peace efforts "in any and every way possible."

According to a senior Obama administration official who asked not to be identified, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov held a working dinner at the State Department July 11 to discuss how to advance Middle East peace.

Speaking by telephone July 11, the official said the Quartet sees "an urgent need to appeal to the parties to overcome current obstacles and find a way to resume direct negotiations without delay or preconditions and to begin with a preparatory phase of talks to maximize the chances of success."

There are gaps remaining between Israel and the Palestinians that are "impeding progress," the official said, and "more work needs to be done to close those

gaps before the Quartet can go forth publicly with the kinds of statements that might allow the parties to actually break through the impasse."

The official said the Quartet needs to work privately with the parties to try to close the gaps in an effort to give direct negotiations between the two parties "real traction and be the right path forward."

The Palestinian leadership is "still evaluating" what it may seek from the U.N. General Assembly in September, the official said. According to press reports, the Palestinians may ask the U.N. to recognize an independent Palestinian state.

However, "we've heard a consistent message from the Palestinian leadership that they prefer negotiations, that they see the ultimate goal of a two-state solution coming through a negotiating path," the official said, and the United States and others in the international community are putting their emphasis on how to close the gaps between the two parties.

In her remarks with High Representative Ashton July 11, Secretary Clinton said the path to an independent Palestinian state lies through direct negotiations, just as the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement between northern and southern Sudanese led to the independence of South Sudan on July 9.

"The United States, the U.K., Norway and other countries were very involved in the 2005 agreement, which ended years of civil war and conflict. In the absence of that agreement, I do not believe there would have been celebration in Juba," Clinton said.

"A resolution, a statement, an assertion is not an agreement," she said. The sooner Israel and the Palestinians can resume direct negotiations, "the sooner there can be the result that many of us have worked for for a long time."

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