

American

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India, U.S. Share Common Terror Threat, Secretary Clinton Says

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington – India and the United States are committed to strengthening their counterterrorism cooperation in what Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says is “a mutually cooperative and essential operational relationship” against a shared threat.

Speaking with Indian Foreign Minister S.M. Krishna in New Delhi July 19, Clinton said counterterrorism and homeland security were emphasized at the U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue, held earlier in the day. The meeting occurred less than a week after three bombs killed 20 people and wounded nearly 130 in Mumbai on July 13. Clinton was making her second visit to India as secretary; she will also visit Chennai during her trip, a first for a sitting U.S. secretary of state.

Clinton expressed U.S. condolences over the Mumbai attacks and pledged support for “your fight, which is also our fight, against terrorism and violent extremism.”

Both governments plan to increase their sharing of intelligence and information, as well as operational planning, investigative assistance and advanced technology. The secretary said the increased cooperation will have “a tremendously beneficial impact for both of us, because a lot of the terrorist networks that threaten you also threaten us.”

“This is a mutually cooperative and essential operational relationship,” Clinton said.

The secretary said India’s neighbor Pakistan is a “key ally” against terrorism, but she urged Islamabad to eliminate terrorist safe havens on its territory and bring the perpetrators of the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai to justice.

Both the United States and Pakistan need to mutually recognize that a safe haven for terrorists cannot be tolerated anywhere, and “when we know the location of terrorists whose intentions are clear, we need to work together in order to prevent those terrorists from taking innocent lives and threatening institutions of the state,” she said.

Clinton said she is encouraged that India and Pakistan are engaged in a dialogue aimed at improving their relationship and resolving areas of conflict.

The United States wants to “encourage both sides to build more confidence between them and work to implement the kinds of steps that will demonstrate the improved

atmosphere that is so necessary for us to deal with the underlying problem of terrorism,” she said.

On trade, Clinton said the United States and India have made a lot of progress, with an increase of 30 percent in bilateral trade during 2010. But she said India and the United States “can take further steps to reduce barriers, open our markets and encourage new business partnerships.”

Doing so will “create jobs and opportunity for millions of our people while strengthening both of our nations’ economic competitiveness,” she said.

India and the United States have worked intensively to strengthen their relationship since the beginning of the Obama administration and are now “building habits of cooperation and bonds of trust, and ... standing on a firm foundation,” Clinton said.

“We believe that we can do even more work to ensure that this important dialogue leads to concrete and coordinated steps that will produce measurable progress for the well-being and betterment of the Indian and American people,” she said.

Countering Weapons Proliferation in Libya a Top U.S. Priority

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington – Countering the proliferation in Libya of small arms and light weapons, including surface-to-air missiles, is a top U.S. national security priority, according to the State Department.

“The United States is actively engaged in international efforts to address security and humanitarian challenges from conventional weapons proliferation in Libya,” a State Department spokesman said July 18.

He said that in the current conflict arms storage depots have been left unsecured, arms and weapons such as “man-portable air defense systems” (MANPADS) have been looted, and the Libyan countryside is “littered with abandoned munitions, unexploded ordnance and land mines.”

Libya has faced widespread civil strife since a nonviolent February protest against the government was met with violent reprisals by longtime dictator Muammar Qadhafi. The international community responded quickly to stem the violence and assist the Libyan people, and on July 15 the United States and its allies recognized Libya’s Transitional National Council (TNC) as the country’s legitimate interim authority. This gives the group access to national funds held outside Libya and provides a major boost to government opponents’ campaign to depose

Qadhafi.

The United States has pledged continued support for the country. The State Department says it has allocated \$1.5 million from existing resources to two nongovernmental organizations, the Mines Advisory Group and the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, to recruit and train local explosive ordnance disposal teams across Libya. The department has requested additional funding to extend projects through mid-2012, the spokesman said. He added that the United States is working with other governments and organizations, as well as the TNC, to support U.N. efforts to coordinate weapons-destruction activities.

The spokesman said that since 2003 U.S. cooperation with countries around the globe has led to the destruction of more than 32,500 excess, loosely secured, illicitly held or otherwise at-risk MANPADS in more than 30 countries. He also said the United States is the world's leading provider of funding and support for conventional weapons destruction, having provided nearly \$2 billion for clearance of unexploded munitions and land mines and to secure and dispose of excess or at-risk weaponry across 81 countries since 1993.

The State Department is leading an interagency partnership with the Defense Department, Homeland Security and other government agencies to address the threat of weapons proliferation in Libya.

AIDS Specialists Set Goal for a Cure

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington – Thirty years after clinical identification of the first case of HIV/AIDS, the international medical community is ready to push for a cure for the disease.

The goal to accelerate AIDS research has been set at the International AIDS Society's conference in Rome July 17-20. With more than 15,000 members in the AIDS field, the IAS is the largest independent society of AIDS practitioners, and its biennial meeting is considered one of the most important scientific meetings devoted to the disease.

The IAS meeting launched the Rome Statement for an HIV Cure July 18, which sets in motion the development of a global scientific strategy, "Towards an HIV Cure." The strategy will strive to build global consensus on scientific problems that must be tackled on the road to an AIDS cure. The vision is to spend a year in development of that strategy, which will be presented in July 2012 at another important international conference devoted to the disease.

Given the way HIV resides in the host's immune system, experts say it is unlikely that researchers could find a cure

that would completely eradicate the virus from the host tissue. Still there are prospects for achieving a "functional cure" – that is, a state in which HIV remains in the body, but the patient's immune system fully controls any resurgence of the virus and ongoing treatment is not necessary.

Treatment, as it is known today, must last a lifetime to keep the virus at bay. Treatment is expensive and inconvenient, and it can have a variety of uncomfortable side effects. Given the number of people with HIV and the continued spread of the virus, International AIDS Society documents project, treatment on such a wide scale is not financially sustainable.

If researchers are to find a cure, they must do so as a community. "Partnership and collaboration are critical to the efforts to find an HIV cure," said Dr. Jack Whittescarver, director of the Office of AIDS Research at the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH). "We need not only the finest minds but the very best in scientific alliances."

NIH announced July 11 that it is awarding \$14 million in 2011 to three U.S.-based research groups that are working on different approaches to finding an AIDS cure. All three groups are hoping to find those pockets – or reservoirs – of HIV that hide in a patient's tissues and currently remain invulnerable to anti-retroviral drugs.

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