

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

August 4, 2011

New White House Strategy Aims to Curb Violent Extremism	1
Peace Corps Celebrates 18 Years in Moldova	1
International Space Mission Explores New Frontier.....	2
Helping Others: A Restaurant's Post-September 11 Legacy	2

New White House Strategy Aims to Curb Violent Extremism

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration announced a new strategy August 3 that enlists the help of local communities to curb the threat posed by terrorist groups and other extremists that threaten the safety of Americans within the United States.

The strategy released by the White House recognizes a growing concern by national security officials of a threat from the radicalization of extremists within the U.S. homeland that has emerged since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

“Most recently, al-Qaida and its affiliates have attempted to recruit and radicalize people to terrorism here in the United States, as we have seen in several plots and attacks, including the deadly attack two years ago on our service members at Fort Hood,” President Obama said in the introduction to “Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States” (PDF, 2.8MB).

A single gunman on November 5, 2009, killed 14 people and wounded 29 others in a rampage at Fort Hood, Texas, which is among the most populous Army posts in the United States. The Army has charged a military doctor, Major Nidal Malik Hasan, in the shooting. There have been other instances of lone U.S. citizens and small groups attempting to carry out terrorist attacks within the country.

The administration’s strategy acknowledges that community residents are often better positioned to take the lead in thwarting a home-grown extremist because they know their communities best.

Obama cited Muslim-American communities in the strategy because they “have categorically condemned terrorism, worked with law enforcement to help prevent terrorist attacks, and forged creative programs to protect their sons and daughters from al-Qaida’s murderous ideology.”

The strategy’s central goal is to prevent violent extremists and their supporters from inspiring, radicalizing, financing or recruiting individuals or groups within the United States to commit acts of violence. The strategy calls for the U.S. government to support local communities by sharing more information about the threat of radicalization; strengthening cooperation with local law enforcement, who work with the communities every day; and helping communities to better protect themselves against violent extremist propaganda,

especially on the Internet, Obama said.

“Achieving this aim requires that we all work together — government, communities, the private sector, the general public and others — to develop effective programs and initiatives,” the strategy says.

The strategy is based on the president’s National Security Strategy and also the National Strategy for Counterterrorism, which says that al-Qaida and its affiliates represent the pre-eminent terrorist threat to the United States. The new plan calls for enhanced federal engagement with local communities, building government and law enforcement expertise for preventing violent extremism, and countering violent extremist propaganda while also promoting U.S. values.

Peace Corps Celebrates 18 Years in Moldova

Washington — A public concert and educational event organized by the U.S. Peace Corps in Moldova honored the friendships American volunteers have formed within their host culture.

More than 5,000 Moldovans attended the event at Ștefan cel Mare Park in Chișinău in mid-July, which commemorated the agency’s 50th anniversary and showcased volunteers’ work in Moldova, the Peace Corps said July 26.

Honored guests included U.S. Ambassador to Moldova Asif Chaudhry, Peace Corps Deputy Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet and Moldovan Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry Vasile Bumacov.

“Today we honor the friendship between Peace Corps volunteers and the communities of Moldova,” Hessler-Radelet said. “This event is an excellent opportunity to learn more about Peace Corps’ legacy of service and the 1,000 Americans that have served as Peace Corps volunteers in villages and cities throughout Moldova for the last 18 years.”

Moldovan and American bands and dance groups provided entertainment at the event while Peace Corps volunteers and staff shared information on their volunteer projects in agribusiness and rural business development, community and organizational development, and school and community health education.

Peace Corps volunteers also discussed Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World), a program that encourages self-confidence, challenges campers to think beyond traditional gender roles and allows volunteers the flexibility to shape lessons to address specific challenges that young women face in their communities, such as societal or health issues.

On July 12, the Peace Corps was presented with Moldova's Order of Honor, the highest state distinction given by presidential decree to foreign organizations and individuals. The award recognized the contributions of current and returned volunteers to community development in Moldova and the continued friendship of Moldova and the United States.

According to the corps, 104 volunteers are serving in Moldova, with 54 trainees to be sworn in later in summer 2011. Volunteers are trained and work in both the Romanian and Russian languages.

More than 1,033 Peace Corps volunteers have served in Moldova since the program was established in 1993.

International Space Mission Explores New Frontier

Washington – An international space mission is spiraling toward the asteroid Vesta on a mission to learn more about the formation of the solar system, NASA announced at an August 1 press briefing.

Dawn is a joint project of NASA, the German Aerospace Center, the Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research, the Italian Space Agency and the Italian National Astrophysical Institute. It is the first probe to enter orbit around an object in the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter.

The spacecraft will provide in-depth analysis of Vesta, which scientists believe is the source of a large number of meteorites that fall to Earth. Dawn will spend one year orbiting Vesta, then travel to the dwarf planet Ceres. The two bodies are the most massive objects in the asteroid belt.

"We have been calling Vesta the smallest terrestrial planet," Chris Russell, Dawn's principal investigator, said at the news conference. "The latest imagery provides much justification for our expectations. They show that a variety of processes were once at work on the surface of Vesta and provide extensive evidence for Vesta's planetary aspirations."

Observations collected throughout the mission will provide unprecedented data to help scientists understand the earliest chapter of our solar system and its formation almost 4.5 billion years ago.

"Now that we are in orbit around one of the last unexplored worlds in the inner solar system, we can see that it's a unique and fascinating place," said Marc Rayman, Dawn chief engineer and mission manager at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

Dawn will be the first spacecraft to orbit two celestial objects in the solar system. By investigating the two very different asteroids, with the same instruments on the same spacecraft, the research team hopes to compare the different evolutionary path each took, create a picture of the early solar system and provide opportunities for significant breakthroughs in knowledge of how it formed.

"It is fantastically exciting that we will begin providing humankind its first detailed views of one of the last unexplored worlds in the inner solar system," Rayman said.

Dawn will be in the approach phase of the Vesta orbit for about three weeks, during which the team will search for possible moons around the asteroid, obtain more images for navigation and observe Vesta's physical properties.

The total cost of the mission, launched September 27, 2007, is \$466 million, which includes 10 years of operations and data analysis. The mission is scheduled to conclude in 2015.

Helping Others: A Restaurant's Post-September 11 Legacy

By Lauren Monsen | Staff Writer

Washington – A New York restaurant known for its sophisticated mix of international dishes has an unusual history, one that inspires it to take care of its customers and its workers.

The restaurant was founded by surviving employees of the Windows on the World restaurant, which was located in the World Trade Center and destroyed by the attacks of September 11, 2001. Determined to carry on, surviving restaurant staffers banded together as business owners to create a new restaurant whose global cuisine reflects its diverse workforce. Called Colors, the restaurant opened in 2006 at 417 Lafayette Street.

According to Colors' website, the restaurant strives to introduce "exciting new flavors that change with the seasons." Sekou Siby, the restaurant's financial and chief operating officer, who is from Côte d'Ivoire, said the restaurant is staffed by workers from Mexico, the Philippines, Guyana and the United States. "Global flavor" remains the restaurant's guiding philosophy, he said.

Ten years after the September 11 attacks, Colors "is still run as a cooperative" dedicated to offering good working conditions and career mobility for its staffers, Siby said.

Colors was created by newly unemployed workers determined to get back to work, and its staff is committed to helping a fresh crop of job seekers. Colors offers lunch

from Wednesday through Friday and dinner every night except Monday. "But the restaurant is also used during the day as a training center for low-income individuals," Siby said. "We've been working with another organization, Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York, that rents this space to train people in table service, cooking and other restaurant-related skills. This is one of the things that has helped the restaurant survive."

Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York, a nonprofit group, was founded in April 2002 to support restaurant workers displaced from the World Trade Center as a result of the September 11 tragedy. It has expanded to advocate for improved working conditions for restaurant workers citywide and to train those seeking employment in restaurants.

Siby, who serves as co-director of the nonprofit group while also handling his responsibilities at the restaurant, said that some trainees are hired by Colors when they complete their training, while others find jobs at other restaurants.

While taking pride in their history and their mission to help others, Colors staffers never lose sight of the restaurant's primary attraction: its cuisine. "At the end of the day, it's about great service and great food," Siby said. "People may like the concept [of the restaurant], but if the dining experience is not satisfactory, people will not come back."

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