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U.S. Deepens Economic Ties with Asia-Pacific Through Trade, Jobs	1
Clean, Energy-Efficient Transportation an APEC Goal.....	1
Regional Defense, Cybersecurity Highlight Australia Talks	2
U.S. Mideast Envoy Brings Plenty of Regional Expertise	3
U.S.-Poland Missile Plan Enters into Force.....	3

U.S. Deepens Economic Ties with Asia-Pacific Through Trade, Jobs

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington – The United States is working to enhance financial ties with its Asia-Pacific partners by creating new trade, investment and job opportunities that will help to boost the regional and global economic recovery.

“We want to make progress toward building a seamless economy in the Asia-Pacific by finding practical and concrete ways to strengthen regional economic integration, expand trade and advance regulatory cooperation and convergence,” Under Secretary of State for Economic, Energy and Agricultural Affairs Robert Hormats said in prepared remarks. He spoke September 13 in Los Angeles about U.S. economic policy in the Asia-Pacific region.

“The world of the early 21st century is increasingly linked by new technologies, rapid increases in international trade and financial flows, global supply chain networks, a diffusion of innovative centers around the world and the rapid proliferation of competitive companies,” Hormats said. This new international system, Hormats said, poses both tremendous opportunities and significant new challenges for the United States.

Hormats said that in a globalizing world, having a strong domestic economy means having an effective foreign economic policy. He emphasized the importance of creating a “more robust and resilient international economic system” for the 21st century that incorporates emerging economic powers across Asia. Hormats said implementing this vision will “enable American businesses and American workers to take greater advantage of global economic opportunities.”

He said the United States is working in several ways to incorporate larger numbers of people across the Asia-Pacific region into the global financial system.

Hormats first highlighted regional cooperation through the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, which President Obama will host in Honolulu in November. The undersecretary said the U.S. delegation will seek during the meeting to strengthen regional economic integration and expand trade by advancing common practices and regulatory cooperation. The U.S. officials also will work toward finding ways to promote environmentally sustainable growth by reducing barriers to trade in environmental goods and services, he said.

Hormats also said the United States is working to pass a free trade agreement with South Korea, which will “cement closer political and strategic partnership with a

key ally and support a lot of American jobs.” He said the agreement would also offer market-opening opportunities to help achieve President Obama’s goal of doubling U.S. exports by the end of 2014.

Hormats said the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is the third critical component to increasing regional economic ties. He said the TPP negotiators are aiming to create trade agreements that address emerging challenges and working to make regulatory systems more compatible to help small and medium-sized businesses participate more actively in international trade. He said the United States is also working to ensure the partnership reflects shared values, such as strong protections for workers, the environment, intellectual property and innovation.

“Our goal is to create not just more growth, but better growth,” Hormats said of the partnership, which consists of the United States along with Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

He said the group is working to reach the broad outlines of an agreement by the APEC annual meeting in November.

The undersecretary pledged the United States will continue to work on finding new ways to forge closer partnerships with the Asia-Pacific region to deepen ties that will benefit countries across the region.

Clean, Energy-Efficient Transportation an APEC Goal

Washington – Energy and transportation ministers from the Asia-Pacific region have pledged cooperation to achieve cleaner, more energy-efficient methods of transportation.

The officials, representing 21 economies in the region, affirmed their commitment to greater progress on initiatives aimed at making transportation cleaner and more energy-efficient, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced September 13.

Their announcement came during the first joint Transportation and Energy Ministerial Conference, which is being held in San Francisco by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the principal economic organization for the region. Secretaries LaHood and Chu hosted the San Francisco meeting.

“Transportation is directly tied to our energy challenges,” Chu said. “To achieve economic prosperity, strengthen energy security and protect the environment, we can and must move to a sustainable transportation future.”

"To create jobs and lay the foundation for a prosperous future, we must grow our economies while staying mindful of 21st-century challenges like climate change and energy efficiency," LaHood said. "Our roadways, runways, railways, waterways and transit systems all must move greater numbers of people and products while leaving a smaller environmental footprint."

Recognizing the transportation sector uses a great deal of energy and emits a significant portion of the greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere, the ministers directed their working groups to study ways in which APEC members could make their transportation systems more energy-efficient.

APEC economies have made good progress toward the goal, adopted in 2007, of reducing the energy intensity of economic activities by at least 25 percent by 2030 as compared to 2005 levels, the ministers said, but they called for further improvements. They also urged further efforts be made to phase out subsidies that promote the use of fossil fuels.

Energy intensity is the term used to describe the energy efficiency of a nation's economy. It is calculated as units of energy consumed per unit of gross domestic product.

Other actions called for by the ministers include:

- Developing energy-efficient transportation systems for livable, low-carbon communities.
- Providing alternative fuels for transportation vehicles and systems.
- Making freight transportation more energy-efficient.

The September 13 Transportation and Energy Ministerial Conference was followed by the Seventh Transportation Ministerial Meeting on September 14.

At that gathering, APEC transportation ministers discussed further promoting innovative, environmentally sustainable transportation. They also discussed the need for enhancing regulatory cooperation among the APEC economies and with relevant international organizations, and for strengthening regional integration by removing barriers to trade and investment.

Regional Defense, Cybersecurity Highlight Australia Talks

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By Cheryl Pellerin
American Forces Press Service

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 14, 2011 - Asia-Pacific defense

cooperation and cybersecurity will be among the topics on the table at the annual Australia-U.S. Ministerial Consultations here this week, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said today.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Panetta will meet with their Australian counterparts to discuss area of mutual interest and to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the ANZUS Treaty, signed in 1951 by Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

Meeting with reporters traveling here with him aboard an Air Force jet, Panetta said he worked very closely with the Australians in a number of areas when he served as CIA director.

"They were very good partners," he added, "and so in this capacity, I look forward to that same kind of relationship."

Panetta will join Clinton, Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd and Defense Minister Stephen Smith for an official dinner tonight. Tomorrow, the leaders will hold consultations at the Presidio, where the ANZUS treaty was signed 60 years ago this month.

At the invitation of Prime Minister Julia Gillard, President Barack Obama will commemorate the 60th anniversary of the ANZUS alliance by visiting Australia in mid-November.

Panetta said he's looking forward to the ministerial meeting, known as AUSMIN. "We'll be discussing how we can strengthen our partnership for the future, particularly in the Asia-Pacific area," he added.

A senior defense official told reporters yesterday in a background briefing that the leaders also will discuss the evolving Asia-Pacific strategic environment, Afghanistan and Pakistan and mutual efforts there, and recent events in the Middle East, "to make sure that we're coordinating our assistance and our support to encourage the democratic transitions taking place there."

A range of short- and long-term alliance issues also will be discussed, the official said, and the two nations will release a joint statement stating that the ANZUS Treaty specifically applies to cyberspace.

Panetta said the focus on cyberspace "is in large measure a recognition ... that cyber is the battlefield of the future, and that we are all going to have to work very hard not only to defend against cyber attacks, but to be aggressive with regard to cyber attacks as well."

The best way to accomplish that, the secretary said, "is not only on our own, but working with our partners."

Other alliance topics include space cooperation, cooperation on U.S. missile defense programs, and progress made by the Bilateral Force Posture Working Group established last year at the AUSMIN consultations in Melbourne.

Working group discussions will focus on “a range of options,” he said, including increasing U.S. access to Australian training, exercise and test ranges; potential pre-positioning of U.S. equipment in Australia; greater use by the United States of Australian facilities and ports; and options for joint activities in the region.

The Australians “are probably our best partners in terms of the Asian-Pacific area,” the secretary said. “We look forward to not only a good conference, but [also to] strengthening that relationship for the future.”

U.S. Mideast Envoy Brings Plenty of Regional Expertise

Washington — As President Obama’s special envoy for Middle East peace, veteran U.S. diplomat David Hale is following in the footsteps of his predecessor, former Senator George Mitchell, to facilitate peace negotiations. Hale and White House special assistant Dennis Ross are currently meeting with leaders in the region.

Hale has previously served as U.S. ambassador to Jordan, director of the State Department’s Office of Israel and Palestinian Affairs and executive assistant to the secretary of state before becoming Mitchell’s deputy in 2009 and succeeding the former senator after Mitchell resigned in May.

Hale’s previous diplomatic assignments include postings in Beirut, Manama, Dhahran and the U.S. mission to the United Nations in New York. He joined the Foreign Service in 1984 after graduating from Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service in 1983.

As the special envoy, he works with Israel, the Palestinian Authority and others in the Middle East as well as U.S. partners in the Quartet (the United Nations, Russia and the European Union) to facilitate peace talks and to advance U.S. efforts to build a permanent peace agreement, leading ultimately to a two-state solution.

U.S.-Poland Missile Plan Enters into Force

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer

Washington — The United States and Poland announced September 15 that an agreement to place land-based SM-3 interceptors at a small air base near the northern town of Redzikowo, Poland, part of a broader limited missile defense system for Europe, has entered into force.

“The U.S. ballistic missile defense system will be located at Redzikowo Base as part of the European Phased Adaptive Approach to missile defense in the 2018 timeframe,” a State Department announcement said. “This base represents a significant contribution by our two nations to a future NATO missile defense capability.”

The original agreement was signed by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski on July 3, 2010, in Krakow.

The announcement comes two days after the United States and Romania agreed to place a similar limited missile interceptor system at an air base near Caracal. And the Turkish foreign ministry also announced September 14 that an early warning radar system will be stationed at a military installation in Kürecik as part of NATO’s missile defense system.

The SM-3 missile interceptors are not offensive weapons, but are kinetic interceptors that collide with potential incoming ballistic missiles. They carry no actual warhead.

The White House said in a statement September 15 that President Obama is committed to protecting the United States, its deployed military forces, European allies and partners against the growing threat of ballistic missiles. In September 2009, on the recommendation of the secretary of defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Obama announced the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) for limited missile defense to provide a missile shield sooner and more comprehensively than previous programs, the White House said.

“To put it simply, our new missile defense architecture in Europe will provide stronger, smarter, and swifter defenses of American forces and America’s allies,” Obama said in the announcement on September 17, 2009.

“It is more comprehensive than the previous program; it deploys capabilities that are proven and cost-effective; and it sustains and builds upon our commitment to protect the U.S. homeland against long-range ballistic missile threats; and it ensures and enhances the protection of all our NATO allies,” Obama added.

At the Lisbon NATO Summit in 2010, NATO leaders endorsed a missile defense capability whose aim was to provide full coverage and protection for all NATO European populations, territory and forces against the increasing threats posed by the widespread development of ballistic missiles, the White House said. And, at the same time, NATO agreed to expand its current missile defense command, control and communications capabilities to provide the same level of protection.

The EPAA system devised by the United States is to be

built in four phases. The first phase addresses short-range and medium-range missile threats by deploying U.S. Navy ships that are equipped with shipboard SM-3 interceptors. The first of these deployments began in March, according to the White House.

Also included in the first phase is a land-based radar installation in Turkey. By 2015, land-based SM-3 interceptors will begin being deployed in Romania and then in Poland by 2018, according to the White House.

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