

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

*A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy*

---

---

November 17, 2011

---

---

<b>President Obama: U.S.-Australia Security Deal Will Bring Regional Stability.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>International Students: Preparing to Be Tomorrow's Leaders.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Note on Expedited Processing of Student Visas .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>United States Provides Aid and Expertise to Thai Flood Victims.....</b>	<b>3</b>

## President Obama: U.S.-Australia Security Deal Will Bring Regional Stability

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — As the Asia-Pacific region assumes its role as the primary engine for global economic growth, the United States is stepping up efforts to maintain security in the region with a new rotational military presence in Australia intended to allow a more effective response to humanitarian and natural disasters, as well as security threats, President Obama says.

“The lines of commerce and trade are constantly expanding. And it’s appropriate then for us to make sure that not only our alliance but the security architecture of the region is updated for the 21st century, and this initiative is going to allow us to do that,” Obama said in Canberra November 16 in remarks with Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard.

Under the agreement, an initial company of 200 to 250 U.S. Marines will be stationed at an Australian military base by mid-2012. The deployment will eventually expand to 2,500 Marine personnel, and the U.S. Air Force will have greater access to Australian Air Force facilities.

“This rotational deployment is significant because what it allows us to do is to not only build capacity and cooperation between our two countries, but it also allows us to meet the demands of a lot of partners in the region that want to feel that they’re getting the training, they’re getting the exercises and that we have the presence that’s necessary to maintain the security architecture in the region,” he said.

The economies in the Asia-Pacific region are “going to be the engine for world economic growth for some time to come,” he said, and the U.S. military presence in Australia will help address the challenge of responding to disasters across such a large area in a more timely fashion and also to equip “smaller countries who may not have the same capacity ... so that they can respond more quickly as well.”

Gillard said the increased military cooperation between Australia and the United States builds on the existing 60-year-old alliance between the two countries, which has been “a bedrock of stability in our region.”

“We are a region that is growing economically. But stability is important for economic growth, too,” she said.

The president said that the United States is “here to stay” as a Pacific power. “This is a region of huge strategic importance to us. ... And we’re going to make sure that we are able to fulfill our leadership role in the Asia-Pacific

region,” he said.

Obama also restated U.S. support for “a rising, peaceful China,” praising the country’s remarkable economic growth which has lifted hundreds of millions of Chinese people out of poverty and improved economic prospects for its neighbors.

“The notion that we fear China is mistaken. The notion that we are looking to exclude China is mistaken,” he said.

But he said China needs to recognize that “with their rise comes increased responsibilities,” and the country not only needs to follow the same economic rules as its trading partners, but also to help underwrite them to help sustain the region’s dynamic economic progress.

“The only way we’re going to grow that trade is if we have a high-standards trade agreement where everybody is playing by the same rules; where if one set of markets is open, then there’s reciprocity among the other trading partners; where there are certain rules that we abide by in terms of intellectual property rights protection or how we deal with government procurement — in addition to the traditional areas like tariffs,” he said.

“Where China is playing by those rules, recognizing its new role, I think this is a win-win situation. There are going to be times where they’re not, and we will send a clear message to them that we think that they need to be on track in terms of accepting the rules and responsibilities that come with being a world power,” he said.

The president’s deputy national security adviser for strategic communications, Ben Rhodes, told reporters in Canberra November 16 that the increased military cooperation between the United States and Australia comes “in response to demand from within the region.”

“The nations of the region have signaled they want the U.S. to be present; [and] would like, again, in many respects and instances, increased partnership with the United States. The ability of the United States to help respond to contingencies is something that has been welcomed in recent years, whether, again, it was work that we’re doing in the Philippines to counter violent extremism, work that we’re doing to counter piracy in the region, the response to the tsunami in Indonesia,” he said.

“So in other words, there’s a demand signal from the nations of the region, and this is something that we’re doing in concert with one of our closest allies. So we believe it’s not just entirely appropriate, but an important step to dealing with the challenges of the future of the Asia-Pacific region,” Rhodes said.

## International Students: Preparing to Be Tomorrow's Leaders

By Lauren Monsen | Staff Writer

Washington — The United States is “working energetically across the globe to increase the numbers” of international students who come to the United States as well as U.S. students who study overseas, says the top State Department official in charge of exchange programs.

“We want people from all different backgrounds and countries to study here,” acting Assistant Secretary of State Adam Ereli said during a November 14 round-table discussion that kicked off International Education Week 2011, which runs November 14–18. He praised Saudi Arabia for the number of students it sends abroad — “an investment in its future generations” — and noted that the president of Chile and five members of the Chilean Cabinet are alumni of the Fulbright exchange program.

Along with Ereli, five students currently or recently enrolled in study-abroad programs spoke at the Foreign Press Center in Washington.

International students are essential to the United States, said Ereli. People-to-people exchanges help create bonds between countries, and “there’s not one country in the world we don’t want stronger bonds with.” Besides, “foreign students enrich our universities. They expose Americans to new ideas, new ways of seeing things — offering new perspectives to professors and other students.”

According to the Institute of International Education, the number of international students in the United States increased to a record high of 723,277 during the 2010–2011 academic year.

One of the student panelists, Singmila Shimrah from India, is pursuing a master’s degree in international relations at George Mason University in Virginia through a Fulbright scholarship. “I’ve been working in northern India with women and youth in conflict-torn areas,” she said. Focusing her U.S. studies on conflict analysis and resolution, she said she hopes “to be a voice for the voiceless; to bring change from the bottom up” in India.

Asked what surprised her about the United States, Shimrah said: “American individualism.” In America, “they see me for who I am, not for my background or for who my parents are.” Also, “I love my professors,” she added. “They’re so open.”

Zvikomborero Zimunya, a Humphrey fellow from Zimbabwe, said U.S. teaching methods were a revelation to her. Zimunya is at the University of Maryland at College Park, studying political communication and new

media. “Here, there is greater interaction between student and professor,” she said. “There’s a transfer of knowledge, [but] you’re encouraged to state your views, to think broadly.”

Iraq’s Wisam Waleed Al-Qaisi, a Fulbright scholar working on a master’s degree in international politics at American University, in Washington, said that although many Iraqis studied abroad in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Iraq had been isolated in recent years, until about 2003. Now, young Iraqis who want to rebuild their country are seizing the chance to study overseas, he said.

“Each student stands as an ambassador to the United States,” said Al-Qaisi, who has been asked by U.S. professors to guest lecture about Iraq. He rated his U.S. experience as “very positive,” adding: “I’ve been surprised by friendly people who are eager to learn about Iraq and other countries.”

Ye Feng, a Fulbright scholar from China, is a doctoral candidate and college English teacher there. Now studying linguistics at the University of Delaware, he said his U.S. professors “encourage students to be skeptical and critical.” Ye said he hopes to adopt a similar approach with his students in China.

American Sheena Hall, who is a Maryland native studying political science at Howard University in Washington, studied in Hyderabad, India, for six months last spring as a Benjamin A. Gilman scholar. Hall said she greatly enjoyed India, but tried to dispel misconceptions about the United States — and particularly about African Americans, who often were assumed to be “very tough, violent and ‘hip-hop-ish’” because of distorted media portrayals.

Zimunya, of Zimbabwe, said she also encounters misconceptions. Many Americans, she said, believe Zimbabweans are “not very well-educated.” In fact, Zimbabwe has a strong school system “and a literacy rate of close to 99 percent.” She was interested, however, to discover Americans questioning their own value systems and beliefs, and worrying about the economy. She said she has learned that “regardless of which part of the world we come from, we are all people with the same concerns and worries.”

The U.S. State Department website says all U.S. embassies and consulates are expediting visa processing for foreign students.

**Note on Expedited Processing of Student Visas**

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson  
Washington, DC  
November 14, 2011

**U.S. Department of State Expedites Student Visa Processing**

During International Education Week, the U.S. Department of State highlights existing efforts to attract future leaders from abroad to take advantage of the exceptional educational opportunities in the United States. We also recognize that foreign students bring with them tremendous intellectual, social, and economic benefits. As part of these efforts, the Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs gives student visa appointments special priority.

All U.S. embassies and consulates expedite visa processing for foreign students to ensure qualified students are able to begin their academic program on time. Worldwide, the maximum wait for a student visa appointment is fewer than 15 days. Foreign students can apply for their visas up to 120 days before their academic programs begin. We always encourage all visa applicants to apply early.

At home and abroad, students continue to seek international education to gain the skills, the contacts, and the experience necessary to succeed in the global marketplace. The consistent growth in international enrollments in the United States attests to the universally recognized pre-eminence of the country's higher education system. International education grew by nearly 9 percent during the 2010/11 academic year, and foreign students studying in the United States brought \$21.3 billion into the domestic economy. Most importantly, educational exchanges foster mutual understanding, respect, and goodwill between Americans and people around the world.

**United States Provides Aid and Expertise to Thai Flood Victims**

Washington — The United States is providing financial assistance and relief-and-recovery expertise to help the government of Thailand cope with the most severe flooding the country has experienced in recent years.

The Department of State announced an additional \$10 million in assistance November 16. U.S. military and civilian personnel in the region have already poured their efforts into the disaster, which began with severe monsoon rains in July and ongoing rainfall above average.

News reports indicate a death toll exceeding 500 in Thailand alone, while the number of dead throughout Southeast Asia may exceed 1,000.

In a joint appearance in Bangkok with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton November 16, Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra expressed thanks and appreciation for the U.S. aid, calling it "not only generous but timely." He also expressed hope for U.S. assistance in coping with the damage done to the nation's food supply. "Cultivation and food production is also an issue of the greatest concern, one that is directly related to food security," Shinawatra said.

Secretary Clinton, who will visit an evacuation shelter November 17, said U.S. teams will also support Thai counterparts in the rebuilding and repair of critical infrastructure damaged by floodwaters.

The USS Lassen is in port in Thailand with personnel and equipment ready to move in on rescue, relief and recovery efforts. The State Department says U.S. resources will increase the capacity of local civilian emergency response. The United States will also help train police and emergency personnel in disaster response and provide equipment such as generators, survival kits and life vests.

In October, when the flooding was at a critical stage, the United States provided boats and marine engines to Thai police assisting flood victims and securing property. The USS Mustin made an unscheduled stop in Thailand and conducted dozens of helicopter survey missions with the Thai military. Crew members also worked with local communities and donated blood and relief funds.

Employees of the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok pitched in on the relief effort, delivering food to victims and gathering supplies, even while some embassy employees were flood victims themselves.

Besides the immediate damage caused by flooding in tens of thousands of homes, Thailand is also calculating the damage to centuries of priceless cultural artifacts, including the ancient capital of Ayutthaya. The State Department announced the U.S. experts in this area will also help with damage assessment, and resources from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation will support the effort.

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