

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## U.S. Increases Sanctions on Iranian Officials

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer  
15 December 2011

Washington – The United States has imposed travel and financial sanctions against two senior Iranian military officials for human rights abuses in Iran in the aftermath of its 2009 elections, the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced.

Sanctions were imposed against Hassan Firouzabadi, chairman of Iran's Joint Chiefs of Staff and Iran's most senior military officer, and Abdollah Araqi, the deputy commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Ground Force, a December 13 Treasury announcement said. They are accused of rights violations during a crackdown on protesters and the mistreatment of detainees after Iran's disputed June 12, 2009, presidential election, which came as Iranians sought to peacefully express their civil and political rights as part of the Green Movement.

Protesters and detainees were held in a ward of Tehran's notorious Evin prison, which is controlled by the IRGC. Firouzabadi is also responsible for the Basij Forces and they have been heavily implicated in the violent crackdowns and serious human rights abuses occurring in Iran since the contested presidential election. The Basij were also implicated in attacks on university students, abuse of detainees and violence against peaceful protesters, Treasury said in its announcement.

"The Iranian people have suffered tremendously at the hands of senior officials, who instead of protecting their basic rights have ordered and orchestrated widespread, serious human rights abuses aimed at silencing criticism and punishing dissent," said Adam Szubin, the director of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). "In support of the Iranian people's quest for justice and accountability, we are taking further action today to expose the involvement of senior Iranian government officials in serious human rights abuses."

American citizens are prohibited from engaging in any transactions with Firouzabadi or Araqi and any financial assets they may have in U.S. banks or other financial institutions, or institutions under U.S. jurisdiction, are frozen by the new order signed by the president, Treasury said.

In addition, the U.S. State Department has issued visa sanctions and barred the men from entering the United States.

"Today's action underscores our enduring commitment to hold accountable Iranian government officials responsible

for or complicit in serious human rights abuses," said Michael Posner, assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor.

"Through today's designations, we affirm that we will take action against those who perpetrate such serious abuses," Posner added. "We will help Iranian citizens hold their government accountable to preserve and protect their human rights, as declared in their own law and international conventions to which the Iranian government is a party."

## USTR Cites Concerns over China's Trade Policies

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer  
14 December 2011

Washington – Ten years after joining the World Trade Organization (WTO), China has made major progress in strengthening its international trade ties, but the office of U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Ron Kirk says significant concerns about the country's economic and trade policies remain.

"Following China's accession to the WTO, Chinese leaders took many impressive steps to implement a set of sweeping commitments," Kirk's office said in a December 12 report. "Despite this progress, the overall picture currently presented by China's WTO membership remains complex, given a troubling trend in China toward intensified state intervention in the Chinese economy."

The report to Congress on China's WTO compliance, compiled annually by the USTR and required by the U.S.-China Relations Act of 2000, commended the country for reducing tariffs, eliminating nontariff barriers to the trade of goods and services and making legal system improvements to protect intellectual property rights.

"These steps unquestionably deepened China's integration into the international trading system," the report said, adding that trade and investment during the past decade have "expanded dramatically between China and its many trading partners, including the United States."

U.S. exports to China have risen from a 2001 total of \$19 billion to at least \$92 billion in 2010, making the country the United States' largest goods export market outside of North America. The report added that China also provides a substantial market for U.S. services, with the cross-border supply of private commercial services totaling \$21 billion in 2010.

However, the USTR said that China's progress toward further market liberalization began to slow in 2006, when "some Chinese government policies and practices raised

increasing concerns that China had not yet fully embraced the key WTO principles of market access, nondiscrimination and transparency.”

The report said that in 2011, “the prevalence of interventionist policies and practices, coupled with the large role of state-owned enterprises in China’s economy, continued to generate significant concerns.” It cited China’s indigenous innovation policies, problems with intellectual property rights enforcement, and discrimination against foreign enterprises as some of the country’s most significant issues.

The USTR said that during the past year, the United States has worked with China to address these concerns.

“Progress was made on some meaningful issues, but many issues remain outstanding, and the United States was frank in expressing its view that the two sides need to redouble their efforts going forward,” the report said.

Looking ahead, Kirk’s office said China will need to reduce market-access barriers, fully embrace the rule of law and uniformly follow the “fundamental principles” of nondiscrimination and transparency.

“Completing this work is critical to realizing the tremendous potential presented by China’s WTO membership, including the breadth and depth of trade and investment – and prosperity – possible in a thriving, balanced global trading system,” the USTR concluded.

Representatives from the United States and China are scheduled to join their counterparts from the 153-member World Trade Organization for talks on global trade during the group’s eighth annual ministerial conference in Geneva December 15–17.

### **Science Points Way to Lifesaving HIV/AIDS Programs**

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer  
14 December 2011

Washington – Moving swiftly to implement the findings of successful research has saved lives and slowed the global pandemic of HIV/AIDS, according to a U.S. leader in the campaign, Ambassador-at-Large Eric Goosby.

Dr. Goosby, the U.S. global AIDS coordinator, spoke December 13 to an audience at the National Institutes of Health, which has been a world leader in scientific breakthroughs about HIV/AIDS and ways to combat it. “The link between knowledge generation and rapid deployment in the epicenter of the epidemic makes for a powerful combination,” Goosby said.

That approach will lead the world to an AIDS-free

generation, Goosby said, a goal President Obama set in a World AIDS Day message December 1.

The President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), first funded by the U.S. Congress in 2003, has worked for broad distribution of the medicines and methods that have tamed the global pandemic. In 2003 only 50,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa had access to antiretroviral (ARV) drugs, the cocktail of medicines that research discovered will arrest HIV and allow a person to live a reasonably healthy life. Now, Goosby said, almost 4 million receive this treatment through PEPFAR.

Treatment programs run by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria have also expanded in the hard-hit nations, with 3.3 million now receiving medicines through that internationally backed funding mechanism.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic began as a problem for medical science to solve, but over time, social and economic consequences of widespread disease emerged as threats to the stability of the worst-affected nations. Goosby said expanding treatment has also helped to ease some of those broad social problems.

“For every 1,000 people we support on treatment for one year, we avert the orphanhood of 449 children,” Goosby said. “That is another dimension of the concept of treatment as prevention.”

One of the earliest studies that demonstrated the effectiveness of AIDS treatment as a preventive measure came in 1994, Goosby said, when a study showed that treatment of HIV-positive pregnant mothers could prevent the transmission of the virus to their infants. Within months of that finding, AIDS specialists developed guidelines for treating pregnant mothers with ARVs.

The practice of treatment-as-prevention has also been proven effective among couples in which one partner is HIV-positive and the other is not. Earlier onset of treatment for the HIV-positive partner leads to a lower likelihood of transmission of the virus to the other.

Expanded treatment and expanded prevention programs have been important in PEPFAR’s almost eight-year history, but Goosby said the program is also dedicated to public health diplomacy. It isn’t just about the lives that are saved today.

“Improving public health requires creating a lasting, durable improvement in the capacity of our partner countries to address their needs,” Goosby said. The history of foreign assistance programs does not show that aid alone can create that capability.

"We are also supporting the development of capable leadership, good governance, peace and stability and sensible economic and social policies," Goosby said. Those goals are harder to achieve than the distribution of drugs and medical technology alone. "But we want our impact to last, and there really are no shortcuts," he said.

As PEPFAR works to improve health care systems in partner countries, the program also aims to help develop the next generation of leaders who will work on an array of issues including both health and development.

### **Past Time for U.N. Action on Syria, U.S. Says**

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer  
13 December 2011

Washington – The Obama administration says the U.N. Security Council's silence on the continuing violence in Syria is "frankly unconscionable," and urged the body, including permanent members Russia and China, to listen to Arab League countries and others who are calling for independent monitors to assess the situation on the ground and help protect civilians from Syrian security forces.

"We think that it is past time for the U.N. Security Council to speak up," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters December 13.

According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, more than 5,000 Syrian civilians have been killed since protests against the regime of Bashar al-Assad began in March. Nuland described the U.N.'s recent report on the violence as "absolutely chilling," reflecting "the viciousness of the regime" against the protesters.

There are now a "chorus of countries" appealing to Russia, China and other Security Council members to vote for the Arab League's proposal for monitors on the ground in Syria, she said.

"It's very hard for us to understand why any country on the Security Council wouldn't want to support the call of the Syrian opposition, the call of the Arab League, the call of all of us for independent monitors and for the return of a free press, which are key components that we'd like to see the U.N. Security Council call for," Nuland said.

Including those components would strengthen the Security Council's action and be "the best way at the moment to provide more protection for innocent civilians," she said.

Nuland said the Obama administration believes that the vast majority of Syrian demonstrators are peacefully calling for change, and that the regime is hoping to divide them along sectarian lines and provoke them into an

armed conflict "because that's what they understand."

Nuland said countries such as Russia who have voiced concerns that the violence is taking place on both sides should have an interest in seeing independent monitors in the country.

"If there are concerns, then let's get those monitors ... [and] all of you in the Fourth Estate back in there," she told reporters.

"Let's have the U.N. Security Council say that and say it loudly and clearly. That's the best way to assess what's really going on and to ensure a balanced picture that the Russians themselves claim is needed," she said.

### **U.S. Satisfied with Outcome of Climate Change Talks**

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer  
13 December 2011

Washington – The U.S. special envoy on climate change is calling the two-week round of talks in Durban, South Africa, a "successful conference," saying the United States is satisfied with the agreement reached by negotiators from almost 200 participating nations.

In a conference call with reporters December 13, Todd Stern said the Durban Platform commits nations to pursue talks on another accord for the reduction of greenhouse gases linked to climate change, an agreement that "would apply to all parties" from both developed and developing nations. For most of the history of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, developed countries bore greater responsibility to work toward emission reductions, a responsibility arising from the belief that their emissions were the principal source of the problem. In the Durban Platform, developing countries agree that they too will be committed to contribute to the solution to climate change in the future.

"That was notable," Stern said. "That's the first time we've seen that kind of thing." He called the change in position a "significant achievement."

Stern said a couple of factors influenced the fall of what he has called "the firewall" between developed and developing countries. The European Union, a party to the Kyoto Protocol and its binding commitments on emission reductions, was firm in its position that a successor agreement to the expiring Kyoto deal would have to apply to all the parties to the convention. Plus, he said, many developing nations "were passionate" about the meeting producing another agreement to work toward inhibiting climate change in the future.

"I wouldn't underestimate the role played by the smaller developing countries," Stern said, especially "the island

states, who see this as an existential problem.”

Small island nations face the first risks of climate change, according to scientific projections. In a warmer world, the ice at the world’s poles would melt, causing the seas to rise with the threat of inundation for territories at sea level. Melting of polar ice has already been documented, and glaciers have shrunk on mountain ranges on all continents.

When he left the United States at the end of November to attend the talks, Stern said he would push for a renewal of commitments made by nations in 2010 at the Cancún round of talks. That agreement called for a Green Climate Fund to help poor countries in the changeover to a clean-fuel economy, creation of an international technology center devoted to the development of clean fuel sources, and transparency in all national reporting on emissions and mitigation activities. Stern said the Durban Platform addresses those activities to his satisfaction.

Questioned about what is next, Stern doesn’t predict that other nations will be ready to enter another full-scale negotiation very soon. He anticipates a period of what he calls “pre-negotiation” when nations develop their own priorities for the next round of talks and examine the positions of others.

### **As Last Troops Depart, U.S. and Iraq Foresee Equal Partnership**

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer  
12 December 2011

Washington – By the end of December, the last American troops will have departed from a “sovereign, self-reliant and democratic Iraq,” President Obama said, and both countries are moving forward on a postwar relationship that he said is one “based on Iraqi sovereignty and one based on equal partnerships, mutual interests and mutual respect.”

Obama met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in Washington December 12 and declared that “after nearly nine years, our war in Iraq ends this month,” and Iraq is assuming its rightful place in the international community.

“People throughout the region will see a new Iraq that’s determining its own destiny, a country in which people from different religious sects and ethnicities can resolve their differences peacefully through the democratic process,” Obama said.

Maliki said the relationship between Iraq and the United States “will not end with the departure of the last American soldier.” While Iraq has successfully proven its ability to be self-reliant in meeting its security challenges,

he said, it wants to continue its security cooperation with the United States, as well as cooperation in the economic, educational, cultural and judicial fields.

“Iraq today has a lot of wealth, and it needs experience and expertise and American and foreign expertise to help Iraq [exploit] its own wealth in an ideal way,” Maliki said, adding, “We hope that the American companies will have the largest role in increasing our wealth in the area of oil and other aspects as well.”

The prime minister also called for a wide range of educational reforms and welcomed agreements that will bring hundreds of Iraqi college graduates to pursue advanced degrees in American universities.

Obama said that the United States will continue to support Iraq and that he wants to see a comprehensive relationship develop so that as cooperation on trade, science, development and security expand, “there is a constant communication between our governments ... there are deep and rich exchanges between our two governments and between our peoples.”

After nearly nine years, the United States has made “an enormous investment of blood and treasure in Iraq,” he said, and even as the U.S. military presence in the country comes to an end, both countries should understand that “our commitment to Iraq’s success is going to be enduring.”

“What’s happened over the last several years has linked the United States and Iraq in a way that is potentially powerful and could end up benefiting not only America and Iraq, but also the entire region and the entire world,” Obama said.

With its diverse population and its potential for economic prosperity, an Iraq that is inclusive and brings together all of its people to build and share in its success can be “a model for others that are aspiring to create democracy in the region,” he said.

### **U.S. Counterterrorism Expert Assesses al-Qaida After bin Laden**

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer  
09 December 2011

Washington – The State Department’s top counterterrorism expert says the loss of Osama bin Laden has put the terrorist group al-Qaida on “a path of decline that will be difficult to reverse.”

“There is no question that bin Laden’s departure from the scene was the most important milestone ever in the fight against al-Qaida,” Daniel Benjamin, the U.S. coordinator for counterterrorism, said at a recent conference in

Washington.

Bin Laden was the founder and sole commander of the terrorist group for 22 years, and was also the iconic leader whose personal story had a profound attraction for violent extremists, Benjamin said during the Jamestown Conference at the National Press Club December 8.

However, Benjamin noted that bin Laden was not the only terrorist leader in al-Qaida who has been lost in the past year:

- Ilyas Kashmiri, who was implicated in the 2009 Mumbai attacks and widely considered to be the most dangerous terrorist planner in South Asia, was killed in Pakistan.
- Harun Fazul, one of the architects of the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, and the foremost member of al-Qaida in East Africa, was killed in Somalia by the forces of the Transitional Federal Government.
- Atiya Abdul Rahman, who was also a highly capable operational commander, was killed in Pakistan.
- Anwar al-Aulaqi, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula's chief of external operations in Yemen, was also killed. Aulaqi was intimately involved in planning and directing attacks against the United States and had opened up a new door on recruitment in the English-speaking world.

Benjamin was quick to point out that even as the core of al-Qaida, who have planned and plotted for the transnational group for decades, have been killed or captured, activity by the affiliates has continued to spread geographically, as have other terrorist groups that are related ideologically.

Al-Qaida and its affiliates "continue to show resilience ... continue to operate in worrisome ways ... and continue to pose a threat to our national security," Benjamin said.

Benjamin noted that al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula remains at the top of the affiliates list despite the loss of Aulaqi. He added that Western governments are concerned about the group's ability to hold territory and to exploit current unrest to advance its plots against regional and U.S. interests.

He noted that in the Sahel, al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb has been the weakest of the major affiliate terrorist groups, but it still raises operating funds with ransoms from kidnappings. Other al-Qaida affiliates have taken to kidnapping as a means to make money.

In the Horn of Africa, al-Shabaab may have had some setbacks in Somalia, but it too has shown interest in pursuing a more diverse set of targets, such as the twin suicide bombings in Uganda during the 2010 World Cup that killed 76 people, Benjamin said.

Meeting the challenge posed by this durable threat requires a redoubling of those things that have worked well in the past and innovating in areas where more can be accomplished, he said.

Benjamin said the United States is focusing on three elements in its counterterrorism strategy:

- Strong partnerships, both individually and multilaterally.
- Creating capable partners by building durable capabilities.
- Countering violent extremism.

"Our diplomatic engagement is essential for this effort, and whether through our frequent bilateral consultations ... or through the kind of intense effort in New York and around the world that led to the U.N. General Assembly's powerful rebuke to Iran for plotting to assassinate the Saudi ambassador here in Washington ... this work is vital," Benjamin said.

He added that "regional cooperation on counterterrorism remains a necessity."

Benjamin said the historical development brought about by the Arab Awakening has helped to discredit the extremist argument that only violence can bring about change. Millions of people are pushing their nations to move away from repressive regimes that have long fueled resentment that underscores extremism. "They are embracing universal human rights and dignity," he said.

"Should these revolts result, as we hope, in durable, democratically elected, nonautocratic governments, [al-Qaida's] single-minded focus on terrorism as an instrument of political change would be severely and irretrievably delegitimized," Benjamin said. "Because democracies increase the space for peaceful dissent and give people a stake in their governance, they greatly weaken those who call for violence and create ways of containing extremism not available to autocratic regimes."

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