

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Heart Disease Is World Killer; Obama Urges Heart Health

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 02 February 2012

Washington — Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the greatest single global killer, the cause of 30 percent of all deaths worldwide, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Members of the U.N. General Assembly in 2011 resolved to emphasize public awareness of this health risk in their home countries and advocate healthier lifestyles that can prevent CVDs.

The United States urges citizens to take responsibility for heart health with the annual recognition of American Heart Month every February, as declared by presidential proclamation.

President Obama's proclamation January 31 called heart disease a "staggering health problem" with one in three American adults affected by some form of cardiovascular disease.

"This month, let us rededicate ourselves to reducing the burden of heart disease by raising awareness," the proclamation said, "taking steps to improve our own heart health, and encouraging our colleagues, friends, and family to do the same."

CVDs are a group of disorders of the heart and blood vessels. Heart disease and stroke are the most widely occurring, but arterial disease in the arms and legs and pulmonary embolism are also included in the group.

Both the WHO and U.S. health agencies have emphasized that these diseases are caused largely — 80 percent, according to WHO — by lifestyle behaviors that individuals have the power to improve: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, physical inactivity and tobacco use.

On the global scale, the WHO is emphasizing the severity of CVDs in the developing world. "People in low- and middle-income countries who suffer from CVDs and other noncommunicable diseases have less access to effective and equitable health care services which respond to their needs (including early detection services)," a WHO fact sheet says.

The dangers of heart disease and other CVDs in the developing world ranked high on the list of concerns when the U.N. General Assembly held a special session on noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in September 2011. The session convened around the belief that NCDs not only adversely affect individuals and families, but that they contribute to a downward spiral of poor health, inability to thrive and sustained poverty.

The special session ended with U.N. member states committing to reduce risk factors, create health-promoting environments, strengthen national policies and health systems, bolster international cooperation and partnerships and promote research and development. The delegates pledged to work with the WHO and other international organizations toward those goals. As the assembly adopted this political declaration, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said, "We can do more than heal individuals — we can safeguard our very future."

AMERICAN HEART MONTH

In 2012, the U.S. National Heart, Blood and Lung Institute will enter a new decade of its February campaigns, The Heart Truth, which alert women to their risk of CVDs. Heart attack long was thought to be a greater health concern for men in the United States, and only in recent years have women realized that they too are at high risk.

The Heart Truth and its centerpiece symbol of the red dress have been important in raising awareness and media coverage over the last decade. Joining the U.S. government in the cause, the fashion industry — including designers, models, and celebrities — is a partner in National Wear Red Day, marked on February 3 this year, when tens of thousands of participants suit up in red apparel as a symbol of their concern about cardiovascular disease.

Secretary Clinton: Singapore Is "Valuable Partner" for U.S.

02 February 2012

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton welcomed Singapore Foreign Minister and Minister for Law K. Shanmugam to Washington and said the two countries are working together on "a full range of issues."

Speaking in Washington February 1 after their meeting, Clinton said, "The U.S.-Singapore relationship is both broad and deep, and it will only continue to strengthen in the years ahead."

Clinton and Shanmugam signed a joint vision statement on a new political framework between the countries, outlining areas of future cooperation including trade, democracy and security.

The joint statement "articulates shared beliefs and goals, a mutual commitment to security, prosperity, protecting diversity, and the rule of law," Clinton said, which "are values that both Americans and Singaporeans cherish."

They also signed a memorandum of understanding to

establish a strategic partners dialogue in which senior officials from both countries will meet annually “to review our bilateral agenda as well as our regional and global cooperation,” she said.

According to the State Department, the next dialogue is scheduled to take place in Singapore in 2013.

The United States and Singapore are teaming up to help the countries of the Lower Mekong area. Development experts from both countries will be sent to Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.

“They will team up to give health workers the tools they need to fight infectious disease, to help improve trade capacity, work to boost tourism, [and] share best practices with teachers, humanitarian disaster relief workers, police and firefighters,” Clinton said.

“We also discussed other ways that we could pursue third-country training to help with the public administration and the civil service of countries,” she said.

The U.S.-Singapore agreements “highlight the importance that we place on our partnership,” Clinton said, and the multidimensional growth of the relationship “is an example of the importance the United States sets on strengthening our engagement in the Asia-Pacific.”

Shanmugam, who is visiting the United States for the first time as Singapore’s foreign minister, said his country welcomes substantial U.S. engagement in the Asia-Pacific region.

“We believe that the U.S. engagement in Asia has been a pillar, the foundation of peace and prosperity in the region,” he said.

U.S. Government Works to Enhance Cyberdefenses

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 02 February 2012

Washington — Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano led a delegation of top U.S. intelligence and security officials in a Senate briefing on threats posed by computer attacks as lawmakers consider a new measure to strengthen cyberdefenses.

The classified briefing February 1 followed testimony on the worldwide threat assessment, an annual Washington hearing with the heads of the government’s intelligence and counterterrorism agencies, who this year cited cyberthreats as a major security concern.

FBI Director Robert Mueller said countering cybersecurity threats will become the top priority for the U.S.

intelligence community in the future. Testifying before the Senate Intelligence Committee January 31, he said the FBI is focusing on cybersecurity as “the next substantial threat,” and laid out a three-part plan to address it.

First, Mueller called for the intelligence community to change its organizational structure to more effectively combat cyberthreats. The intelligence community long has known that threats against the United States could come in the form of cyber-espionage or threats to critical infrastructure such as the nation’s utilities and transportation systems.

“In the same way we changed to address terrorism, we have to change to address cybercrime. We have to recruit and hire and bring on the persons who are capable of doing it,” he said.

The director also called for local, state and federal agencies to share intelligence to more effectively address cyberthreats. Mueller commended the Obama administration’s development of the National Cyber Investigative Task Force, created to bring together all bureaus with a role in addressing computer attacks in order to combat threats collectively.

Mueller’s third point addressed the need for legislation to create a national data-breach protocol for reporting cyberthreats.

Cyberthreats were cited by other intelligence chiefs during the January 31 briefing as a major security concern due to the ever-increasing importance of information technology as a key part of the infrastructure of modern societies. The speed with which these technologies move into more and more aspects of life far exceeds the pace at which security practices are adopted, according to the assessment by Director of National Intelligence James Clapper.

“We foresee a cyber-environment in which emerging technologies are developed and implemented before security responses can be put in place,” Clapper testified.

To avoid this, lawmakers have proposed a bill to compel operators of vital infrastructure, such as power grids, water-treatment plants and phone carriers, to boost cyberdefenses. The Senate measure, which has yet to be formally introduced, would authorize the Homeland Security Department to identify infrastructure critical to the U.S. economy and national security and develop standards that must be met to protect them.

U.S. Provides Aid for Improving Labor Rights in Colombia

By Bruce Odessey | Staff Writer | 02 February 2012

Washington — The Obama administration has awarded \$2 million for technical cooperation aimed at improving labor rights in Colombia, the U.S. Department of Labor says.

Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis announced the grant during a February 1 meeting with Colombian Minister of Labor Rafael Pardo in Washington. The International Labour Organization (ILO) will use the money “to develop a robust presence in Colombia,” the Labor Department said in a press release.

The ILO, a United Nations agency, will help Colombia implement the April 2011 Colombia Action Plan Related to Labor Rights. That plan, concluded between Colombia and the United States, was crucial to passage by Congress of the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement. President Obama signed the legislation implementing the trade agreement in October 2011.

“Minister Pardo and his leadership team share our commitment to worker rights and strong and effective labor law enforcement,” Solis said. “The grant from the U.S. Department of Labor announced today is but one effort to help ensure that Colombia has all the tools it needs to carry out this commitment.”

The Colombia Action Plan committed the country to improve protection of labor rights, prevent labor violence and prosecute instances of such violence.

U.S. labor unions and other groups opposed to the free-trade agreement assert that the Colombia Action Plan has not prevented the murder of labor leaders in that country.

Acknowledging how much work remains to improve labor rights in Colombia, Solis reaffirmed U.S. commitment to cooperating with Pardo. The Labor Department said that, “To date, Colombia has met each milestone in the action plan.”

Education, Awareness Focus of World Cancer Day

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 01 February 2012

Washington — The United States joins the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), the World Health Organization and a host of other players in recognition of World Cancer Day February 4, an event to raise awareness of one of the leading causes of death worldwide.

Cancer, in its many forms, took 7.6 million lives in 2008,

the last year of comprehensive data available. Deaths attributed to cancer are expected to top 11 million in 2030, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Lung, stomach, liver, colon and breast cancer cause the most deaths each year. WHO says as many as 30 percent of all cancer deaths are brought on by the risks we take in life.

A main objective of World Cancer Day is to warn people about those risks, all of which are within the individual’s power to control: high body mass index, low fruit and vegetable intake, lack of physical activity, tobacco use and alcohol use.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says on its World Cancer Day Web page, “Research suggests that one-third of cancer deaths can be avoided through prevention, and another third through early detection and treatment.”

The 2012 recognition of World Cancer Day is the first since the global community took an important step forward in combating cancer and other noninfectious diseases last year. The U.N. General Assembly held a special session on noncommunicable diseases in September 2011 to engage governments in taking actions to reduce occurrence of diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Raising awareness about noncommunicable diseases is especially important for developing countries, where half the world’s cancer occurs but where public health infrastructure is least prepared to detect and treat disease before it becomes irreversible.

CDC reports that it has joined the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the UICC and other organizations in a project to close the cancer data gap in developing world nations. The Global Initiative for Cancer Registry Development in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (GICR) will help produce sound data on the occurrence of cancer as a step toward prevention.

“The need is pressing to expand the coverage of population-based cancer registries,” according to WHO documents, “in order to obtain more complete and reliable data to guide cancer control interventions.”

Cancer registries are a base for epidemiological research in a given country as they keep detailed data on the types of cancer and the characteristics of their occurrence. Experts are able to review this data and detect patterns that can be further analyzed to produce prevention measures.

Cancer registries in the United States describe 80 percent of the cancer cases that occur, but in South Asia registries capture data on only 4 percent of cases, and in Africa 0

percent.

Another CDC message for World Cancer Day is that prevention starts in childhood with the introduction of good health habits regarding diet, exercise and weight control. Playful, energetic children who want to stay outside are also vulnerable to severe sunburn. "Just a few serious sunburns can increase your child's risk of skin cancer later in life," reports CDC.

The CDC is also trying to raise awareness about the human papillomavirus (HPV), a common virus that can be passed between partners during intercourse, as a principal cause of cervical cancer and a possible cause of vaginal and vulvar cancers. A vaccine is available to prevent HPV, and the CDC recommends it for girls 11 and 12. Girls and women 13 to 26 years old are also advised to get the vaccine if they did not do so at an earlier age.

Clinton to U.N.: Act on Syria or Be Complicit in Violence

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 31 January 2012

Washington — The Obama administration has strongly urged the United Nations Security Council to back an Arab League plan for ending the violence in Syria that proposes a democratic transition in the country after nearly one year of violence and at least 5,400 civilians killed by their government's security forces.

Speaking at the U.N. Security Council in New York January 31, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said, "We all have a choice: Stand with the people of Syria and the region or become complicit in the continuing violence there."

Addressing members of the council, Clinton said the Arab League plan "represents the best effects and efforts of Syria's neighbors to chart a way forward, and it deserves a chance to work."

In its proposal, the Arab League has demanded that Bashar al-Assad's regime immediately stop all attacks against the Syrian people and allow them to peacefully demonstrate, as well as release all of those it has arbitrarily detained, return its military forces to their barracks and allow independent monitors, humanitarian workers and journalists to have "full and unhindered access" to the country, Clinton said.

In addition, "we urge the Security Council to back the Arab League's call for an inclusive Syrian-led political process to effectively address the legitimate aspirations and concerns of Syria's people, conducted in an environment free from violence, fear, intimidation and

extremism," she said.

The secretary warned that in the face of months of continued attacks by Syrian security forces, more citizens are taking up arms to resist the brutality, and as a result "violence is increasingly likely to spiral out of control" in the country.

The longer the situation continues "the harder it will be to rebuild once President Assad and his regime is transitioned and something new and better takes its place," Clinton said.

"Syria belongs to its 23 million citizens, not to one man or his family," she said.

Despite Assad's brutality, Clinton said change is coming to the country, but she asked, "How many more innocent civilians will die before this country is able to move forward toward the kind of future it deserves?"

She condemned the Syrian government's "divide-and-conquer" strategy, in which it has pitted the country's many ethnic and religious communities against each other, and said that the voices and participation of all minorities will be needed in a post-Assad Syria to help ensure universal rights, the rule of law and the end of widespread corruption in the country.

Addressing Syrian minorities directly, Clinton said: "We do hear your fears and we do honor your aspirations. Do not let the current regime exploit them to extend this crisis."

The United States stands ready to work with all of its colleagues in the Security Council to pass a resolution in support of the Arab League's proposals to restore peace to the country and uphold the rights of all of its people, Clinton said.

But she said the council's failure to act will mean abandoning the Syrian people, spurning the Arab League and emboldening a dictator, and that "would compound this tragedy, and would mark a failure of our shared responsibility, and shake the credibility of the United Nations Security Council."

U.S. Intelligence Gives Congress a Roundup of World Threats

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 31 January 2012

Washington — The U.S. intelligence community scored some significant victories in 2011, notably the capture of Osama Bin Laden and other highly placed al-Qaida operatives, but a threat assessment delivered to a U.S. Senate committee January 31 indicated that the job will

not be getting easier in 2012.

With more than 40 years of experience in this field, Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence he's never seen such a complex array of challenges. "Never before has the intelligence community been called upon to master such complexity on so many issues in such a resource-constrained environment," he said.

Delivery of the worldwide threat assessment is an annual Washington ritual, as heads of all the government's intelligence and counterterrorism agencies appear before congressional committees.

Terrorism remains the first threat cited in the report. But without bin Laden and the emergence of a strong new leader, al-Qaida is weakened, though Clapper predicted that regional affiliates will continue to promote the jihadist agenda.

Weapons proliferation is also a serious threat, Clapper said, citing Iran's growing capability to produce a nuclear weapon and North Korea's export of ballistic missiles.

Regarding Iran, members of the Senate panel engaged in some speculation about whether 2012 might be the year leaders in Tehran would move forward on assembly of a nuclear weapon. Clapper said the intelligence community has concluded that the decision will come down to a cost-benefit analysis.

"Starting with the Supreme Leader's worldview, and the extent to which he thinks that would benefit the state of Iran or, conversely, not benefit," Clapper said, "we don't believe he's made that decision yet."

Cyberthreats also are cited as a major security concern because of the ever-increasing importance of information technology as a key part of the infrastructure of modern societies. The speed with which these technologies move into more and more aspects of life far exceeds the pace at which security practices are adopted and improved, according to the assessment.

"We foresee a cyber-environment in which emerging technologies are developed and implemented before security responses can be put in place," the director of national intelligence said.

Senator Barbara Mikulski, representing the state of Maryland, spoke with some alarm about the country's failure to be more aggressive in developing strategies to protect itself from cyberthreats and to counter cybercrime.

"Interpol [the International Police Organization] says cyber is the growing crime and it affects state secrets,

trade secrets," she said. Mikulski found fault with Congress for failing to address this security concern even though cyberattacks have been well documented in recent years as a danger to governments' or organizations' capacity to function.

Taking a global perspective, Clapper said unfolding events in many countries create potential security concerns for the United States. "Virtually every region has a bearing on our key concerns of terrorism, proliferation, cybersecurity and instability. And throughout the globe, wherever there are environmental stresses on water, food and natural resources, as well as health threats, economic crises and organized crime, we see ripple effects around the world and impacts on U.S. interests."

Turning to Afghanistan and U.S. involvement there, Clapper said the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) still plays a significant role in maintaining stability. "ISAF's efforts to partner with Afghan national security forces are encouraging, but corruption and governance challenges continue to threaten the Afghan forces' operational effectiveness," he said.

While some local governments in Afghanistan are creating structure, providing services to citizens remains problematic. The country remains quite dependent on international assistance to function, and the assessment finds doubt in the international community about the extension of that support beyond 2014.

In Iraq, the world threat assessment finds that the Iraqi government is capable of keeping violence in check, and Iraqi security forces are also showing competence in protecting their country. While political progress is slow, Iraqi citizens "are pursuing change through the political process, rather than violence," according to the text of the report.

Representatives of seven agencies in intelligence and counterintelligence were on the panel to present the threat assessment and answer questions from lawmakers. Senator Kent Conrad of North Dakota asked each member to sum up the last challenging decade by answering one question, "Have we made progress against terrorism?"

"Yes" was the answer offered by the agency heads, even as they acknowledged persistent threats remain.

While U.S. agencies have been successful in dismantling some terrorist networks, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Robert Mueller worries about so-called lone wolves, "those individuals who have been radicalized, trained on the Internet, have the capability of developing IEDs [improvised explosive devices] and other mechanisms on the Internet."

Mueller says the FBI has had a number of successes in the past year apprehending such individuals, but he says lone wolves are a continued and unpredictable threat.

U.S., Mongolian Diplomats Celebrate 25 Years of Official Ties

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 31 January 2012

Washington — U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia Jonathan Addleton and Mongolian Ambassador to the United States Khasbazaryn Bekhbat have marked the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Washington and Ulaanbaatar in a ceremony at the Library of Congress.

The opening of official ties on January 27, 1987, was a milestone in Mongolia's "struggle for independence and dignity as a nation and a culture," Bekhbat said at a ceremony in the library January 30. The past 25 years have been a period of "unimaginable growth" in relations between the two countries and peoples.

He noted that his government first broached the topic of establishing Washington-Ulaanbaatar relations in the 1970s with Andrei Gromyko, who was foreign minister of the now-defunct Soviet Union. Gromyko vetoed it with a "steely nyet," Bekhbat said. It was not until Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev ushered in reforms in the 1980s that formal ties between Mongolia and the United States became possible.

In presenting his forthcoming book *A Most Helpful Factor: U.S.-Mongolian Diplomatic Relations, 1987-2012*, Addleton said that relations between the two countries go back 150 years to when an American named Mr. Pelosi traveled through Mongolia on his way from Beijing to Saint Petersburg, using a pass issued by China's Qing Dynasty. He held up a facsimile of that colorful travel pass and said it will become part of the Library of Congress' Asia collection. After Pelosi came more American travelers and merchants who brought Model-T Fords, Harley Davidson motorcycles and jazz to Mongolia, Addleton said.

Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Ann Stock said the United States and Mongolia have a shared commitment to the preservation of Mongolian culture. The Library of Congress' Mongolian collection began with the donation of 16 books in Mongolian and Tibetan languages by the first U.S. government envoy to Mongolia, William Rockhill, in the early 20th century. Today the Mongolian collection has more than 6,000 volumes and is growing, Stock said. Exchanges between Mongolia and the United States include scholars, athletes, musicians and business people; Stock added that the United States is committed to helping emerging

democracies everywhere.

By amassing books and other materials in 470 languages, the Library of Congress helps the United States understand countries and cultures around the world, according to Jeremy Adamson, the library's director for collections and services.

U.S., Japan Make Progress in Trade Harmonization

30 January 2012

Washington — Japan and the United States have made important progress on a range of trade and regulatory issues as well as on new areas of joint cooperation that will expand trade opportunities for producers and consumers in both countries.

"I welcome the progress we have made through the U.S.-Japan Economic Harmonization Initiative [EHI], which expands job-supporting business and export opportunities," said U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk. "Addressing issues of concern and working closely together to advance new areas of cooperation will further deepen our relationship with Japan, a strong ally."

Areas of progress achieved in the EHI talks include these:

- Strengthening vaccine cooperation: Japan expanded access for citizens to three lifesaving vaccines and strengthened cooperation with the U.S. government to bolster its vaccination programs.
- Introducing spectrum auctions: Japan will introduce a system within three years enabling commercial spectrum to be assigned by auction. Spectrum auctions will increase competitive opportunities for new entrants and new wireless technologies by improving objectivity, transparency and accountability in the spectrum-assignment process.
- Strengthening intellectual property protection: Japan introduced new legal protections that enhance the ability of intellectual property right holders to defend their products and services from unauthorized use through technological measures, such as copy and access controls.
- Reducing the drug and medical device lag: Japan made important progress to improve access for Japanese patients to lifesaving and other advanced pharmaceuticals and medical devices by shortening the lag by several months between the time regulatory approval is sought and a final decision is made for a range of products.
- Improving access for cosmetics and medicated cosmetics: Japan revised rules to enable new efficacy claims in advertising and labeling for cosmetics, and

further streamlined the import process for cosmetics and medicated cosmetics.

- Streamlining merger reviews: Japan revised rules to increase the speed, transparency and predictability of anti-monopoly merger reviews, bringing Japan's process into closer alignment with global best practices.

The EHI, launched in November 2010, aims to contribute to Japanese and U.S. economic growth by harmonizing approaches that facilitate trade, address business climate and individual issues, and advance coordination on regional issues of common interest. The process is led by the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and includes the participation of multiple agencies in both governments.

Obama Has Overseen Major Shifts in U.S. Foreign Policy

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 30 January 2012

Washington — In the three years since President Obama's inauguration, the world has seen significant shifts in U.S. foreign policy as the United States has ended its involvement in Iraq, focused its efforts on nuclear nonproliferation and security, and emphasized the importance of the Asia-Pacific region to American interests.

If the United States continues on the course the president has set, "I think we will see in 2016 the U.S. posture in the world will look very different than it did in 2008," said White House Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes.

Rhodes was speaking January 30 at the Center for American Progress, a public policy think tank in Washington.

Obama campaigned on a commitment to end the U.S. military involvement in Iraq, and Rhodes said that commitment has now been met. In August 2010, 100,000 U.S. troops were removed and all U.S. combat operations ended in the country, and in 2011 the last American forces were withdrawn, fulfilling the U.S. drawdown agreement with the Iraqi government.

The drawdown has not only allowed an opportunity for the United States and Iraq to build a new bilateral relationship as sovereign states, but it has also enhanced U.S. efforts against the international terrorist group al-Qaida.

Iraq "was the overwhelming focus of U.S. foreign policy for so many years. It is almost hard for some of us to

remember that today, but really for five years or so, Iraq really consumed most policymakers in Washington and our actions around the world," Rhodes said.

"Ending the war in Iraq has been a critical part of our shift to a more focused effort against al-Qaida. It's manifested in resources allocated against al-Qaida. It's manifested in how the government spends its time," including greater U.S. special operations forces capabilities in Afghanistan against al-Qaida, he said.

The global war on terrorism has been transformed into a more narrow U.S. effort against al-Qaida. Rhodes said the coming withdrawal of U.S. forces in Afghanistan will allow even more focus on the terrorist group and its affiliates in Somalia, Yemen and elsewhere.

The greatest potential danger to U.S. national security is a nuclear weapon in the hands of a terrorist organization. Rhodes said that during the first three years of his term, President Obama has rebalanced the U.S. national security strategy to include a comprehensive nuclear security and nonproliferation agenda to help counter that threat worldwide.

The president's strategy has resulted in the landmark Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) with Russia under which both countries are reducing their nuclear weapons stockpiles by 30 percent.

Under the president's leadership, the international community has set a goal of preventing nuclear terrorism by securing all of the world's vulnerable nuclear materials by 2014. Through his dual-track approach toward Iran and North Korea, Obama has increased global pressure on both countries and deepened their isolation as a result of their nuclear activities.

Obama also reduced the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security strategy while maintaining the U.S. moratorium on nuclear testing, and he has pledged not to use nuclear weapons on nations that are in compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Rhodes said that during the Obama administration, the United States has continued to support greater freedom and democracy around the world, but it is doing so "through an approach that empowers movements for change rather than necessarily trying to impose U.S. outcomes on situations."

That approach has guided the U.S. response not only to recent Arab political uprisings, but also toward developments in countries including Côte d'Ivoire, South Sudan and Burma, he said.

The United States has also shifted its focus to the Asia-

Pacific region, not only through changes in its defense budgeting and its decision to send a U.S. Marine contingent force to Australia, but also through trade developments such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the completion of a free-trade agreement with South Korea, and U.S. participation in the East Asia Summit and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Rhodes said the president has also broadened the U.S. relationship with emerging powers such as India, Brazil, Indonesia and Turkey, and he has elevated the Group of 20 (G20) leading economies to replace the Group of Eight (G8) as the premier forum for international economic cooperation.

Obama has also shifted the role of U.S. assistance in developing countries to emphasize capacity investment, which has the long-term goal of helping those countries become more self-sufficient and in less need of foreign assistance.

Three years after President Obama's inauguration, Rhodes said, there is "a huge demand for U.S. leadership around the world and for its partnership in global trade and security."

"There's no other nation that comes close to playing the role that America plays" in the international system and global developments, he said.

Willard: U.S. Welcomes Rotations, Not Bases, in Asia-Pacific

By Donna Miles | American Forces Press Service | 30 January 2012

The following article was originally posted on January 27 to the Department of Defense website.

Washington — The United States has no interest in establishing new military bases in Asia and the Pacific, but welcomes opportunities to rotate forces there and would consider doing so in the Philippines, if offered, the top U.S. military officer in the region said today.

"We would welcome discussions with the Philippines along those lines, but there's no aspiration for bases in Southeast Asia," Navy Adm. Robert F. Willard, the U.S. Pacific Command commander, said at the Foreign Press Club here.

Willard called the ongoing strategic-level dialogue between the Defense Department and the Philippine defense ministry part of "episodic" engagements focused on the two countries' alliance and ongoing military cooperation.

"For a long time, we've been working closely with the armed forces of the Philippines to seek a broader balance in the capabilities within the Philippines," he told reporters.

This, he said, recognizes that issues such as maritime security and stability are as important as the army-centric counterinsurgency and counterterrorism cooperation there. "We are interested in the Philippines in a maritime sense becoming increasingly self-sufficient, and we'll help where we can," he said.

Asked directly if the United States would ever reestablish a permanent base at Subic Bay, once a major U.S. naval base, Willard made clear it's highly unlikely. The base, which closed in the early 1990s, was once the largest U.S. Navy installation in the Pacific.

"There is no desire nor view right now that the U.S. is seeking basing options anywhere in the Asia-Pacific theater," he said.

Willard called Australia's and Singapore's offers for the United States to rotate forces there much more attractive. These arrangements enable Pacific Command to more conveniently and less expensively maintain a presence closer and more convenient to potential contingencies in the region, he said.

President Obama and Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced in November that beginning in the middle of this year, company-size rotations of 200 to 250 U.S. Marines will begin deploying near Darwin in Australia's Northern Territory for six-month rotations. Gillard said the presence will expand to a force of 2,500 over the next several years.

In addition, Singapore has invited the United States to forward-deploy littoral combat ships there. Former Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates first announced that plan at last year's annual Asia Security Conference in Singapore.

Meanwhile, the United States continues working to establish closer military-to-military ties with China, Willard said. He noted that the relationship is "sustaining itself" at the strategic level but said he hopes to be able to advance it to the operational and tactical levels.

"I would say there's potential there," he told reporters. "And I'm gratified that at the strategic level, that dialogue has persisted. I'm not satisfied that the military relationship is where it needs to be."

U.S. Increasing Support for Western Hemisphere Human Rights Panel

30 January 2012

Washington — The United States will increase its financial support to one of the Western Hemisphere's top human rights panels and will work to maintain the panel's autonomy from political interference, the State Department said January 27.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton met January 27 at the State Department with Dinah Shelton, president of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), and the members of the commission.

A principal and autonomous organ of the Organization of American States (OAS), the commission, headquartered in Washington, advances the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the Americas. "It impacts thousands of lives in the hemisphere through the issuance of decisions and recommendations to OAS member states to improve the human rights conditions in their countries," the State Department said in a summary of the meeting.

Clinton stressed the United States' support for the work of the commission and its rapporteurs, the summary said, and told the panel members that the United States would increase financial support for the IACHR.

"We are thankful for the steadfast support that the United States has showed to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights," Shelton said on the panel's website.

The commission, the State Department said, "plays a unique role and is a model for other regions." The panel investigates individual petitions that allege violations of human rights and publishes special reports on individual countries. It also promotes human rights through the work of its rapporteurs, such as the special rapporteur for freedom of expression. The commission "has helped to protect and in many cases saved the lives of those who work to advance human rights and advocate for the needs of vulnerable populations," the State Department summary said.

The seven members of the commission each have responsibility for specific countries in the Western Hemisphere and for specific themes, such as the rights of indigenous peoples, the rights of migrant workers and their families, the rights of children, the rights of women and human rights defenders. The State Department is working to establish a special rapporteur for the protection of the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people within the IACHR

"The defense and promotion of human rights is a

foundation of the OAS, and the United States is committed to continuing support of the Commission's work and its independence," the State Department summary said. "Preserving the IACHR's autonomy from political interference is a pillar of our human rights policy in the region."

On January 1, the commission welcomed three new members: Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, a dual citizen of Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago; Rosa María Ortiz, a citizen of Paraguay; and Tracy Robinson, a citizen of Jamaica. They join Shelton, the chair on the panel from the United States; José de Jesús Orozco Henríquez, a citizen of Mexico, Rodrigo Escobar Gil, a citizen of Colombia, and Felipe González, a citizen of Chile.

With the three new members, the commission will be majority female for the first time in its history. The seven members of the panel are elected by the General Assembly of the OAS, and act independently, without representing any particular country.

The panel was created at an OAS foreign ministers meeting in Santiago, Chile, in 1959. It was formally established in 1960 when the OAS Permanent Council approved its statute.

The IACHR is one of two bodies of the inter-American system entrusted with promoting and protecting human rights. The other is the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, located in San José, Costa Rica.

[More information](#) on the IACHR is available on the commission website.

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