

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

*A Weekly Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy*

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May 11, 2012

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## NATO Summit to Reaffirm Afghan Transition Plan

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 10 May 2012

Washington – The May 20–21 NATO Summit in Chicago will focus on the alliance’s mission in Afghanistan, including its shift from a combat role to a supporting role for Afghan security forces, as well as defense capabilities and partnerships among member nations to meet the security challenges of the 21st century.

In testimony before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee May 10, the State Department’s assistant secretary for European and Eurasian affairs, Philip Gordon, told U.S. lawmakers he believes the summit will result in an agreement on “an interim milestone” in 2013 when the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) will shift its mission from combat to providing training and assistance as alliance members agreed at their 2011 summit in Lisbon.

“Our core principle has been in-together, out-together. And at Lisbon, the alliance as a whole, ISAF as a whole, agreed that combat troops would remain, performing their mission, being successful to the end of 2014, after which they would be gone,” Gordon said.

He said the peak number of troops in the Afghan national security forces (ANSF) will be around 350,000, but the force will likely decrease to 230,000 troops over the next 10 years.

“Our principal guiding thinking about this all along is that ANSF needs to be sufficient to do the mission, but also sustainable, which is to say affordable over the long term,” he said.

He added that “the Afghans can't do this by themselves,” and the international community “is going to have to step up and play a major role, probably for the next decade, in ensuring that ANSF are sustainable.”

Deputy Assistant Defense Secretary for European and NATO Policy James Townsend said 2013 will see the completion of the transition of security responsibility to the ANSF, which are already taking the security lead in much of the country.

Townsend praised the performance of the ANSF in recent security incidents, such as the April 15 attack by Taliban forces on targets in Kabul.

“We've been pretty impressed with the work of the ANSF,” he said. “They are certainly up to the task of taking the lead in terms of combat.”

Despite differences within NATO, all of its members

agree that the alliance must be “unified and strong,” Townsend said.

“Looking out into the future, challenges to the United States and our allies can come from ballistic missile proliferation, cyber attack, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, as well as from just the instability that we can see happening as turmoil takes place as nations wrestle to set up their forms of government. We must be ready to meet emerging threats. We would prefer to meet these challenges together with allies and not alone,” he said.

He cited NATO’s role as “a hub and an integrator of a network of global security partners” that has allowed it to put “military teeth” behind alliance political decisions, such as its role to protect Libyan civilians from former Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi’s security forces in 2011.

Libya offers “an illustration on how we were able to come together politically, work with the United Nations, work with the international community – not just with our European allies, but broadly – and then take a course of action,” and “execute it successfully,” he said.

Gordon said the meetings in Chicago will not be “an enlargement summit” to expand NATO's current membership, but the United States remains “as supportive as ever of the open-door policy,” and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton plans to meet with representatives from its four aspirant members: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Georgia.

“NATO's door remains open to European democracies that are willing and able to assume their responsibilities and obligations of membership,” he said, and all four countries are “working closely with allies to meet NATO membership criteria.”

Regarding NATO’s relationship with Russia, there continues to be cooperation in areas of mutual interest despite disagreements over missile defense and Russia’s military occupation of parts of Georgia, Gordon said.

“The best example of cooperation is our joint efforts in Afghanistan, where Russia's transit support has been critical to the mission success,” he said.

“Let me be clear: NATO is not a threat to Russia nor is Russia a threat to NATO,” Gordon said.

## U.S. Backs Reforms for Mideast Stability, Prosperity

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 10 May 2012

Washington – The United States will promote political and economic reforms in the Middle East and North

Africa in the coming year to help the rapidly changing region stabilize with more freedom and prosperity.

“There is no going back,” Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman told the U.S. House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia May 9. “People demand dignity, basic democratic rights, access to economic opportunity and an end to rampant corruption.”

Helping the countries in the region develop democratic and inclusive political systems with growing, open economies will protect core U.S. interests in the region, such as countering the proliferation of nuclear weapons, combating the risk of radicalization and working for a viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Feltman said. He appeared before the subcommittee to explain the administration's budgetary request for the coming fiscal year, which begins October 1.

Feltman requested \$770 million for a program called the Middle East and North Africa Incentive Fund, which he said will tie financial assistance to progress in implementing reforms.

The chairman of the subcommittee, Representative Steve Chabot of Ohio, expressed skepticism about the incentive fund. “I fear this fund risks reinforcing a chronic bad behavior in the implementation of our foreign assistance: substituting money for thoughtful policy,” he said.

The final congressional budgetary allocation is months away, requiring approval in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Regarding Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, where popular uprisings have toppled long-standing dictators, Feltman said parties rooted in religious faith will play a larger role in politics than in the past. As new governments emerge, the United States will convey the message that all democracies have an obligation to reject political violence, govern transparently under the rule of law and defend human rights.

To help the new governments provide better material lives for their people, the United States will support reforms to expand economic opportunity, especially to meet the demands of the growing youth population. “No real change will occur without a new growth model, a rule-based framework, a much bigger role of the private sector, and a more inclusive economy, hinging on competition rather than only on connections,” he said.

Regarding Syria, Feltman said the regime led by Bashar al-Assad must go for the country to have an orderly, stable and comprehensive political transition. The United States is using enormous diplomatic and economic

pressure and supporting the civilian opposition with training and nonlethal equipment. Eventually the people in the Assad regime “perpetrating atrocities must be held accountable,” Feltman said.

The United States will remain committed to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East with a secure Israel existing side-by-side with a viable Palestinian state. The United States will fund and support reform efforts by the Palestinian Authority, especially the continued professionalization of its security forces, he said.

Commenting on Iran, Feltman said its government must demonstrate that its nuclear program is “exclusively” for peaceful purposes. “We will maintain pressure through sanctions and we will work with our allies in the region to maintain security in the face of threats from Iran,” he said.

The United States also is building a variety of partnerships to counter terrorism in the region. “Our support for legitimate governments is the best means of countering violent extremism,” he said.

### **U.S. Response to Future Water Crisis Takes Shape**

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 10 May 2012

Washington — The United States is developing a response to the strain bearing down on worldwide water resources in the decades ahead.

A U.S. intelligence report made public in March outlined the potential for water-related issues to become national security problems in various places around the world. At a Washington policy and research organization May 9, the U.S. State Department revealed a multipronged strategy to prepare for the emergence of water problems “that will risk instability and state failure [and] increase regional tensions,” as the intelligence assessment predicts.

The National Intelligence Council Water Research, prepared by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, predicts that problems relating to water shortages, quality or flooding will develop in the next 10 years in “many countries important to the United States.” Without more effective water management measures, the lack of water availability will become a problem threatening national security in some places by 2040.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton requested the report and she named Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Maria Otero to lead the U.S. response to the challenges outlined in the study.

Otero told the Washington audience that the first priority she and Clinton have identified is to help other nations develop their capacity in resources and expertise to cope with future water-scarcity problems. “We know that it is

countries and communities that have to lead in securing their own water and in securing their own water future," Otero said.

The United States must also work to increase international awareness of the potential for future water crises by increasing and better coordinating diplomacy. The United States will help developing countries better prepare for the challenges they'll face, Otero said, and help them "to prioritize so that water and sanitation are part of their national plans, part of their budgets and part of their overall thinking."

Otero said finding solutions to secure adequate water supplies for growth and development will require enormous levels of funding that the United States must help mobilize. The application of science and technology to the problem is an important part of the strategy.

"We have enormous resources and capacity in this area," Otero said, "and this is in line with what we are trying to do in other areas," such as food security, improving public health and addressing climate change.

Building international partnerships to address these challenges is another objective in the strategy, one that Clinton put in motion on World Water Day March 24 when she announced a compact to create the U.S. Water Partnership. Otero said this partnership will make the best use of the greatest national asset: knowledge and expertise in this specialized area.

According to a March State Department fact sheet, the partnership "will serve as a central synthesizer and force multiplier — making information easily accessible, connecting people and resources, and leveraging the assets of partners to offer a range of integrative solutions." The partnership will seek to build stronger collaborative relationships among business, government, academia and other entities in water resources.

The water partnership — in combination with the findings of the intelligence report — reinforces the Obama administration view, Otero said, "that water is not just a health issue, not just an economic development issue or an environmental issue, but also a security issue." Otero said that water issues will "stay on top of our foreign policy and national security agenda as we move forward."

The intelligence report foresees scenarios where water becomes more than the essential life element it is, but also is used as a tool or a weapon. Retired Major General Rich Engel explained the report and said the analysts could envision circumstances where regional water sources could become a source of conflict as an upstream state attempts to siphon off resources that have traditionally

flowed to a downstream state.

Or, the analysis suggests, terrorists could target attacks on water supply, purification and sanitation facilities as a means to cause widespread disruption for a community, its people and its economy.

"In other cases it would be states that might actually use water against their own populations for population control," said Engel, who led development of the report. The analysis found that multinational conflict over water supplies might be "plausible," but probably not in the near future.

The intelligence report identifies improved use of water in agriculture as the most critical area for improved conservation technologies. Worldwide, agriculture consumes almost 70 percent of supplies, but the percentage varies widely between developed and developing countries. One factor in excessive levels of consumption is that farmers are given free or very-low-cost water supplies.

"If you continue with that mindset, you don't develop any mindset to use [water] efficiently," Engel said. More disciplined policies in pricing and allocation can address inefficient use, but these are "hugely difficult political decisions that have to be made locally."

Poor water policy is likely to lead to depletion of groundwater supplies in some agricultural areas, the report finds, an outcome that could cause disruption in global food markets and other consequential social instability.

### **Western Hemisphere Cooperation Grows Along with Democracy**

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 09 May 2012

Washington — A senior U.S. official, speaking to the Council of the Americas May 8, said the Western Hemisphere is a region of rising democracy, prosperity and social inclusion.

Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta Jacobson said the Summit of the Americas in Cartagena, Colombia, in mid-April was a resounding success, even though disagreements among participants precluded a joint communiqué at the end.

The message from the summit is "about the quality and candor of our leaders' discussions, and it's about the hemisphere's accelerating record of cooperation and integration," she said.

Looking back over the past 18 years since the first Summit of the Americas in 1994, the region has undergone

profound political, economic and cultural changes, she said.

The Cartagena gathering was characterized by “an incredibly diverse group of democratic leaders from every corner of the hemisphere ... talking with remarkable candor about the things that matter most to their people, usually in very down-to-earth terms,” she said.

Cooperation among governments, the private sector and civil society “is playing out in real life throughout the hemisphere,” she said, taking place directly among countries sharing experience, know-how and direct support. She said that at Cartagena, the summit for the first time had private sector and civil society meetings taking place simultaneously, setting a precedent for the future.

She provided illustrations of multidimensional cooperation taking place in trade, energy, education, drugs and measures against crime and violence.

“We have all moved away from a one-dimensional focus on law enforcement” to handle drugs, crime and violence, she said, adding that these issues must be met also in their social and public health dimensions with shared responsibility.

She said the Obama administration rejects the legalization of drugs, which some leaders in the hemisphere have called for, while calling for an honest debate about how to deal with all aspects of the issue.

Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano also addressed hemispheric security from a different angle. She said her department seeks international partnerships to strengthen security while expediting legitimate trade and travel. Napolitano said she has traveled to numerous countries in the hemisphere in recent months, signing agreements on human trafficking and other transnational crimes. Protecting the global supply chain is a particular focus of her department, she said.

Jacobson said the summit participants agreed on 16 of 19 paragraphs of the proposed communiqué, showing consensus on most of the issues confronting the hemisphere. With regard to the disagreements, she said the Obama administration regrets that some leaders in the hemisphere, many of whom came to power through hard-won democratic freedoms, did not take a stronger stand favoring democracy in Cuba. She also said there has been a backsliding toward suppression of freedom of expression. Freedom of expression, she said, is vital to fair elections, honest government and sustainable growth.

A prominent voice from Congress also addressed the conference. Speaker of the House of Representatives John

Boehner said he endorses strong U.S. engagement in the hemisphere to expand trade and defend against security threats.

### **Panetta: U.S.-China Relationship One of World's Most Critical**

By Cheryl Pellerin | American Forces Press Service | 08 May 2012

*This article was originally posted May 7 to the Department of Defense website.*

Washington — Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta welcomed Chinese Defense Minister General Liang Guanglie to the Pentagon May 8 as part of the first U.S. visit by a Chinese defense minister in nine years.

Liang's visit occurs at a time when the armed forces of both nations seek to expand cooperation, improve understanding, build trust and reduce differences.

“The United States and China are both Pacific powers, and our relationship is one of the most critical in the world,” Panetta said at a news conference with Liang after their meeting.

“In my meeting with General Liang, I expressed my commitment to achieving and maintaining a healthy, stable, reliable and continuous [military-to-military] relationship with China,” the secretary said, adding that at Liang's invitation he will visit China within the next few months.

“We share many interests across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond,” Panetta added, “from humanitarian assistance to concerns about weapons of mass destruction to terrorism to drug interdictions to trade to counterpiracy.”

The nations have worked together in several areas, the secretary said, and expect to expand cooperation in areas such as peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and counterpiracy.

“As you all know,” Panetta said, “the U.S. Department of Defense recently released a new defense strategy, recognizing that no region is more important than the Asia-Pacific for our country's future peace and prosperity.”

Liang spoke through an interpreter, describing the purpose of his visit as being “to implement the important agreement reached by President Hu Jintao and President Obama on developing the China-U.S. state-to-state and military-to-military relationship.”

As part of that agreement, the general said, both nations'

militaries will continue to take advantage of ongoing defense consultative talks, defense policy coordination talks, the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement and the defense telephone link between Washington and Beijing.

Both sides, he added, acknowledge that cooperation in security areas in the Asia-Pacific region serves each other's fundamental interests, and that both agree to conduct joint exercises on disaster recovery and counterpiracy operations this year.

"At present, China-U.S. bilateral relationship is on a new starting line in history," Liang said, "to build a new kind of military relationship based on equality, cooperation and mutual benefit."

On his tour of U.S. defense facilities, Liang visited Naval Base San Diego in California over the weekend. After he leaves Washington, he will travel to Miami to visit the U.S. Southern Command and its commander, Air Force General Douglas Fraser.

There, Southcom officials will highlight opportunities for practical cooperation in areas such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and expand the conversation on nontraditional security cooperation efforts such as counternarcotics, an important part of Southcom's mission.

May 9, Liang will visit Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for meetings and interaction with the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force and a chance to interact with some of the senior Marine Corps noncommissioned officers.

He also will visit Fort Benning, Georgia, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina, and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, to have lunch with cadets.

At the news conference, Panetta described several ways in which the United States and China have already worked together and will expand – including peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and counterpiracy.

"On counterpiracy," he said, "China has ably conducted maritime operations in the Gulf of Aden for more than three years, and these operations have helped to secure the free flow of commerce in vital sea lanes from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean."

Thanking Liang for those efforts, the secretary said that later this year U.S. and Chinese ships will conduct a combined counterpiracy exercise in the Gulf of Aden.

Panetta said he also conveyed his appreciation to Liang

for China co-chairing a group dedicated to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

On regional security challenges, the two leaders discussed North Korea and other areas of mutual interest, Panetta said, "areas that require our continued cooperation and dialogue." They also spoke about maritime areas, cyberspace, nuclear proliferation and missile defense, the secretary said.

The goal is to enhance cooperation throughout the region and with China to promote peace and stability there, Panetta said.

"We recognize that the United States and China will not always agree on every issue," he added, "but we believe our military-to-military dialogue is critical to ensuring that we avoid dangerous misunderstandings and misperceptions that could lead to crisis.

"A positive, cooperative, comprehensive United States-China relationship is absolutely essential to achieving a secure Asia-Pacific region," he continued, "and a more secure future for both of our nations."

### **Secretary Clinton Encourages More Openness in Indian Economy**

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 07 May 2012

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton expressed confidence in India's ability to compete economically all over the world and said that a broader number of its people will see their standard of living rise as the Indian economy continues to open up.

Speaking May 7 at La Martiniere School for Girls in Kolkata, Clinton acknowledged that there are difficult trade decisions that need to be made by local Indian leaders, but said that in trade and investment deals with some U.S. companies, "there are a lot of benefits that may not necessarily be immediately perceived," noting the successful partnership between Indian farmers and PepsiCo corporation to boost agricultural production.

The United States hopes that India will continue to open its markets to multibrand retail, she said. "Part of the reason for that is there is an enormous amount of experience that can be brought to India on supply chains management, on developing relationships with small producers so that the production will be then made available in larger quantity, and there can be all kinds of assistance" from the American private sector, she said.

The secretary said she is certain that "India can compete with anybody, anywhere. And the more open India becomes over time, the greater the rise in standard of

living and opportunity for the broader number of people will be.”

During her first visit to India in 1995, as first lady of the United States, the bilateral trade between the two countries was about \$9 billion; it has grown to more than \$100 billion today, Clinton said.

If restored and repaired, Kolkata’s port can be “turned into one of the great ports looking east” for trade with India’s neighbors in Asia and the Asia-Pacific, she said.

“This is the kind of vision that I believe should occupy the minds of the leaders of the region right now, because we all have to lift our heads up. We cannot just keep being preoccupied with our own internal political problems, because a lot of the solutions lie outside with having greater peace, stability and prosperity that we are a part of, and I would hope that would be on the agenda for India to lead,” she said.

Clinton said although India and the United States may not agree on every issue in the international arena, the relationship between the world’s largest democracy and the world’s oldest democracy is fundamentally “very sound” and “will only get deeper and broader as time goes by.”

As pluralistic democracies with citizens practicing religions from all over the world, “India and the United States are the greatest rebukes to religious extremism” and its hatred of tolerance, she said.

In their strategic dialogue, American and Indian leaders “discuss and air every single issue,” including those in which they don’t agree, and “I think that’s the way you should develop a relationship. So I’m very confident about the relationship going forward,” Clinton said.

The secretary visited Bangladesh before arriving in Kolkata and traveled on to New Delhi for continued meetings May 7–8.

### **Online Gamers Join Battle Against Malaria**

07 May 2012

Washington – Improving malaria diagnosis in the developing world may get some help from an unlikely source. Researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles have developed a computer game that could use the power of online crowdsourcing to identify the parasites that cause malaria, one of the greatest killers of Africa’s children.

Online crowdsourcing has a proven record of delivering good answers in evaluating consumer products and providing ideas in research and development challenges.

A problem is presented to an online audience, members respond with suggestions and observations, and they do so for free, motivated by their own interest.

Researchers at UCLA worked from the assumption that large groups of non-experts could be trained to recognize infectious diseases with the accuracy of trained pathologists. Microscopic views of malaria-infected red blood cells are distributed for viewing by the online crowd through digital images. The UCLA team found that a group of non-experts they recruited to play the game delivered accurate diagnoses within 1.25 percent of the results that medical professionals would produce.

The power of the group helps deliver accuracy, researchers say. “If you look at one person’s response, it may be okay, but that one person will inevitably make some mistakes,” said Aydogan Ozcan, an associate professor of bioengineering and a co-author of the crowdsourcing research. “But if you combine 10 to 20, maybe 50 non-expert gamers together, you improve your accuracy greatly.”

If hundreds, even thousands, are taught to play the UCLA game, many more cases of the disease could be diagnosed more quickly, at no cost, with a high degree of collective accuracy, according to a UCLA press release.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that about 216 million malaria cases occurred in 2010 worldwide, resulting in more than 650,000 deaths. Ninety percent of those deaths were in Africa, WHO reports, among children under 5.

Early diagnosis of malaria is important because untreated the disease can escalate very rapidly – going from mild symptoms, similar to those caused by other viral infections, to severe symptoms of coma and renal failure within hours. Currently, diagnosis must be done by a trained pathologist equipped with a microscope who views images of cells from a suspected malarial patient and counts the disease-causing parasite. It’s a time-consuming task, and the capacity to put the personnel and equipment in place where they are needed is difficult in underdeveloped countries.

“Scaling up accurate, automated and remote diagnosis of malaria through a crowdsourced gaming platform may lead to significant changes for developing countries,” Ozcan said.

But getting an early diagnosis is only part of the problem. Cases of other viral infections are frequently mistaken for malaria, and drugs are prescribed inappropriately. Better diagnosis through the crowdsourcing game could address that problem too.

"It could eliminate the current overuse and misuse of anti-malarial drugs, improve management of nonmalaria fevers by ruling malaria out, lead to better use of existing funds, and reduce risks of long-term side effects of anti-malarial drugs on patients who don't need treatment," said Sam Mavandadi, a postdoctoral scholar in Ozcan's research group and the study's first author.

As an introduction to the game, each player is briefed on malaria and views sample images of malaria-infected red blood cells. The player then moves into the actual game, where he or she views multiple frames of red blood cell images and use a syringe-like tool to kill the infected cells.

"It is diagnostics outside the box – that is, the study introduces an entirely new concept in diagnostics with the use of games for this purpose," said Karin Nielsen, a professor of infectious disease in UCLA's Geffen School of Medicine. "The potential applications of this new approach are immense."

The UCLA team is working to set up field trials of the diagnostic tool. Funding for the research came from several agencies in the U.S. government, including the U.S. Army Research Office, the Office of Naval Research, the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health.

### **Biodiversity Loss Seen as Harmful as Pollution**

04 May 2012

Washington – When species in an ecosystem die off, the productivity of the system declines, and the damage done ranks with the harm caused by climate change, pollution or other major forms of environmental stress, according to new research.

This work, made public May 2, is the first comprehensive examination of biodiversity loss as it compares to other forms of environmental decline.

"Some people have assumed that biodiversity effects are relatively minor compared to other environmental stressors," said biologist David Hooper of Western Washington University, the lead author of the paper. "Our results show that future loss of species has the potential to reduce plant production just as much as global warming and pollution.

Previous work has shown that the more biological diversity present in a given system, the greater is the system's productivity. Funded by the Division of Environmental Biology of the National Science Foundation (NSF), this work sought to discover if the corollary would be true – the less the diversity, the less productivity.

"Loss of biological diversity due to species extinctions is going to have major effects on our planet, and we need to prepare ourselves to deal with them," said ecologist Bradley Cardinale of the University of Michigan, another co-author. "These extinctions may well rank as one of the top five drivers of global change."

Hooper, Cardinale and researchers from other institutions in the United States, Canada and Sweden combined ecosystem data from a large number of previously published studies and focused on two system processes – plant growth and the decomposition of dead plants by bacteria and fungi. They built a database from existing research, drawing on almost 200 experiments that examined these processes.

"Within the range of expected species losses, we saw average declines in plant growth that were as large as changes in experiments simulating several other major environmental changes caused by humans," Hooper said. "Several of us working on this study were surprised by the comparative strength of those effects."

For example, plant growth could decline by 5 percent to 10 percent in ecosystems where species loss fell within 21 percent to 40 percent of the species. Where species loss rises over 41 percent, the ecosystem effect became comparable to the effects of climate warming or increased ultraviolet radiation.

The study authors say the findings are strong enough that policymakers should begin to take heed of how adverse effects on biodiversity could have broader consequences, but more research must be done to understand how the combined effects of the environmental problems might alter ecosystems.

The NSF supported the work through the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis, a research center at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where researchers use existing data to better understand fundamental issues in ecology and allied fields.

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