

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Secretary Clinton’s Preface to State Department 2011 Human Rights Report	1
Key Facts on State Dept.’s 2011 Human Rights Report	1
U.S. Official Promotes Trade in Southeast Asia	2
President Obama Administration Urges Senate to Approve Oceans Treaty	3
Panetta to Travel to Singapore, Vietnam, India	4
NATO Defense, Afghanistan Withdrawal Are Key Summit Issues	4
Secretary Clinton’s Call with Aung San Suu Kyi	5
International and Homeland Security “Inextricably Linked”	5
Admiral Says Pacific Command Priorities Reflect New Strategic Guidance	6
Secretary Clinton Urges Sri Lanka to Make Reconciliation Plans Public	8

Secretary Clinton's Preface to State Department 2011 Human Rights Report

24 May 2012

The following preface by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton is taken from the U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011.

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
May 24, 2012

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011

Preface by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

The world changed immeasurably over the course of 2011. Across the Middle East, North Africa, and far beyond, citizens stood up to demand respect for human dignity, more promising economic opportunities, greater political liberties, and a say in their own future. Often they faced tremendous odds and endured violent responses from their governments. The resulting upheavals are still unfolding today in places like Syria, where the regime has brutalized its own people. In Burma, after years of repression, the government has taken preliminary steps to allow reforms to begin. This year's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices chronicle these dramatic changes and the stories of the people defending human rights in almost 200 countries around the world.

Congress mandated these country reports more than three decades ago to help guide lawmakers' decisions on foreign military and economic aid, but they have evolved into something more. Today, governments, intergovernmental organizations, scholars, journalists, activists, and others around the world rely on these reports as an essential update on human rights conditions around the world - where we have seen progress, where progress has come too slowly or at great cost, and all too often, where it has been rolled back.

Our reports are founded on the simple truth at the heart of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Respect for human rights is not a western construct or a uniquely American ideal; it is the foundation for peace and stability everywhere. Universal human rights include the right of citizens to assemble peacefully and to seek to reform or change their governments, a central theme around the world in 2011. As President Obama has said, "History offers a clear verdict: Governments that respect the will of their own people, that govern by consent and not coercion, are more prosperous, they are more stable,

and more successful than governments that do not."

In my travels around the world as Secretary of State, I have met many individuals who put their lives on the line to advance the cause of human rights and justice. In ways small and large, they hold their governments accountable for upholding universal human rights. Their courage and commitment to peaceful reform are an inspiration. This report recognizes their bravery and should serve as a reminder: The United States stands with all those who seek to advance human dignity, and we will continue to shine the light of international attention on their efforts.

These reports are part of our broad commitment to promote human rights. Every day, officials from the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and many other government agencies devote themselves to advancing human rights as a priority of U.S. foreign policy. They champion our values in every country of the world and stand up for the inherent rights and freedoms of all people. I am honored to work alongside them, and I thank them for their contributions to this report.

On behalf of all of them, and everyone around the world working to protect human rights, I hereby transmit the Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011 to the United States Congress.

Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State

Key Facts on State Dept.'s 2011 Human Rights Report

24 May 2012

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson
May 24, 2012

FACT SHEET

2011 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

On May 24, 2012, the Secretary submitted the 2011 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (Human Rights Reports) to the United States Congress. The Human Rights Reports provide the facts underlying U.S. efforts to promote respect for human rights worldwide. They inform U.S. government policymaking and serve as a reference for other governments, international institutions, non-governmental organizations, scholars, interested citizens, and journalists. The Human Rights Reports assess each country's situation against universal human rights standards, during each calendar year, and each report stands on its own. Countries are not compared to each other or placed in any order other than

alphabetically by region. This year, the Department modernized both the format of the reports and the online user interface.

Human Rights Around the World in 2011: Key Trends

The reports record the state of human rights throughout the world in 2011. It was a year of significant change in the Middle East and North Africa as citizens stood up and demanded universal rights, dignity, greater economic opportunity, and increased political participation. Those demonstrations sent aftershocks rumbling around the world.

In Tunisia, citizens participated in transparent and credible elections for a Constituent Assembly. That Assembly elected a former political prisoner as the country's interim prime minister. In Burma, the government took important steps toward political reform and released more than 200 of its political prisoners. And, in Colombia, the government continued to strive to improve justice in human rights cases.

Unfortunately, 2011 witnessed negative developments as well. A number of countries became less free as a result of flawed elections; restrictions on the universal rights to freedom of expression, assembly, or association, including on the Internet; moves to censor or intimidate the media; or attempts to control or curtail the activities of nongovernmental groups. Other disturbing trends include an increase in anti-Semitism, and continued persecution of other religious minorities, including Ahmadis, Baha'is, Tibetan Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and others. In many countries there was an increase in abuse, discrimination, and violence against members of racial and ethnic minorities; people with disabilities; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.

The focus of the Human Rights Reports is on the human rights performance of other governments. We note that the United States does examine its own human rights record against its international commitments and obligations in many other fora. For example, in December, the United States submitted a lengthy report to the U.N. Human Rights Council on U.S. implementation of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. The United States also engages in the U.N. Universal Periodic Review process, through which the human rights records of the U.N.'s 193 Member States are reviewed and assessed once every four years. These reports are available on HumanRights.gov.

New Format and Interface for the 2011 Human Rights Reports

In keeping with the Secretary's 21st Century Statecraft Initiative and the President's Open Government Initiative,

the 2011 Human Rights Reports were redesigned this year to be more accessible to a broad spectrum of readers. The State Department developed a streamlined format for each country report, which now includes a country-specific executive summary and illustrative examples of the significant human rights problems reported in that country in 2011. The decision to streamline this year's reports facilitates understanding of the facts and should not be interpreted in any way as a lessening of concern for the overall human rights situation in any particular country.

The format of the 2011 Human Rights Reports also makes them easier to read online. The redesigned reports contain clearly marked headings and a table of contents, and can be shared via social media. Users can also now research topics across countries using the *Build a Report* tool.

To view the new 2011 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices visit www.HumanRights.gov/reports.

U.S. Official Promotes Trade in Southeast Asia

24 May 2012

Washington – U.S. Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade Francisco Sánchez concluded his participation in Trade Winds-Asia on May 21 with a stop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

In his Trade Winds visit to Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia, Sánchez promoted the benefits of expanding U.S. exports to Southeast Asia and discussed increasing foreign direct investment from the region into the United States.

"The Asia-Pacific region has developed into an economic force in the world, and the United States has played a role in this growth," Sánchez said. "Our bilateral trade relationship with the region is a win for all parties."

Roughly 100 U.S. companies interested in Southeast Asia's markets were involved in Trade Winds 2012, an eight-day trade and business development conference and trade mission. The Trade Winds mission was held in Asia for the first time, reflecting the U.S. Commerce Department's commitment to keeping the U.S.-Asia-Pacific partnership growing as it continues to generate jobs and expand economies on both sides of the Pacific.

U.S. goods exports to the Asia-Pacific region totaled nearly \$900 billion in 2011 – a 15 percent increase from 2010 – and made up more than 60 percent of total U.S. goods exports to the world.

"Our partnerships are providing jobs and growth for the American economy, while U.S. products and services are

helping to fuel economic development throughout the region," Sánchez said.

While in Asia, Sánchez met with local American Chambers of Commerce. He also met with government officials and business leaders in the region to discuss trade issues such as the advancement of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Sánchez also promoted foreign direct investment by Malaysian companies into the United States.

"Trade Winds was more than a conference; it was an opportunity to strengthen U.S.-Asia commercial ties while working to boost U.S. exports and support American jobs," Sánchez said. "I'm happy that public and private-sector representatives came together to make the most of this opportunity."

President Obama Administration Urges Senate to Approve Oceans Treaty

23 May 2012

Washington — The top-ranking foreign policy officials in the U.S. government went to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee May 23 attempting to end a debate that began in the 1980s — whether the United States should join 160 other nations to become a party to the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The president is for it. The secretaries of defense and state are for it, as are most of the brass-plated officers of the U.S. military establishment. But a few members of the U.S. Senate are not, and since treaty accession requires a positive vote from that body of the U.S. Congress, UNCLOS has been adrift in the choppy waters of partisan politics for years.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton was the first witness, presenting the committee with a list of economic, defense, navigational, jurisdictional and territorial reasons that strengthen the case for the United States to join the treaty. She said a "limited but vociferous opposition" is not heeding the facts as recognized by all the important sectors with interests in the sea-ways of the world.

"I therefore urge the committee to listen to the experts, listen to our businesses, listen to the Chamber of Commerce, listen to our military," Clinton said, "and please give advice and consent to this treaty before the end of this year."

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry, a Democrat from Massachusetts, said he won't bring the issue to a vote soon. "We will wait till the passions of the elections have subsided," Kerry said, before he'll call on members to endorse or reject the

treaty. But he also promised a series of hearings that will analyze the treaty, its clauses, advantages and disadvantages from many different perspectives.

In a political climate where agreement between Democrats and Republicans is rare, Republican Richard Lugar also endorsed the treaty, as a former chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who had tried to get an affirmative vote on the compact in 2004.

"We're making the job of our Navy more difficult," Lugar said, "despite the long-standing and nearly unanimous pleas of Navy leaders that United States participation will help them maintain navigational rights more effectively and with less risk to the men and women they command."

Opponents of U.S. accession to UNCLOS argue that the U.S. Navy asserted itself on the high seas historically, so why not now? Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey said the U.S. Navy does not because the world is changing, and more nations are demonstrating their own powers on the sea. "The force of arms does not have to be and should not be our only national security instrument," Dempsey said. "Joining the convention would provide us with another way to stave off conflict with less risk of escalation."

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said protection of U.S. national security interests depends on adoption of the treaty. "For too long, we have undermined our moral and diplomatic authority to fight for our rights and our maritime interests, and for too long we have allowed our inability to act [on the treaty] to impair our national security." Panetta was also emphatic that U.S. moral authority is based in the fact that, "We play by the rules." But non-accession of UNCLOS has left the United States on the fringes of the prevailing set of international maritime rules, he said.

Senator Jim DeMint, a Republican from South Carolina, countered that, "I don't know how [UNCLOS] creates a system of rules we can count on," when diplomatic history provides many cases in which the United States and other nations have disagreed about the provisions of a treaty.

Panetta said that UNCLOS gives the United States very favorable terms. Former President Ronald Reagan balked at the originally negotiated version of the treaty, and objected to several points. By the 1990s, all those points were renegotiated to resolve the Reagan objections, but the treaty still has encountered opponents who argue that the United States is sacrificing its maritime sovereignty to the assembly, council and secretariat established as UNCLOS enforcers.

Panetta and Clinton both argued that the United States, with the longest coastline of any nation in the world, stands to gain a great deal through UNCLOS. The treaty gives each nation an exclusive economic zone of 200 nautical miles beyond its shorelines with rights to recover or harvest whatever resources might be found there. In the case of the United States, Clinton said, that area is estimated to be about 700,000 square kilometers.

Panetta to Travel to Singapore, Vietnam, India

By Jim Garamone | American Forces Press Service |
23 May 2012

This article was originally posted on May 22 to the Department of Defense website.

Washington — Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta will leave next week for a weeklong trip to Asia, Pentagon press secretary George Little announced May 22.

Panetta will leave May 30 to participate in the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore and will then travel to Vietnam and India.

On the way to Asia, he will visit with the head of the U.S. Pacific Command, Navy Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III, at his headquarters in Hawaii as well as with service members assigned there.

The secretary then flies to Singapore to deliver remarks at the opening plenary session of the Shangri-La Dialogue, where he is expected to speak about U.S. defense policy in an era of austerity.

He will also hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Australia and other nations, Little said.

Panetta will then travel to Vietnam for a two-day visit. "The United States has a long-term commitment to advancing a strong bilateral defense relationship with Vietnam that is based on mutual trust and understanding," Little said. "This visit will afford us an opportunity to continue to work on that very important relationship."

Panetta will go on to India for a two-day visit. "Further developing the U.S.-India relationship is a priority for the United States government, and our bilateral relationship is one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century for the United States," Little said.

Little stressed the central role of the Asia-Pacific region in U.S. strategic guidance. "The secretary, when he was last in Asia, previewed much of that strategy," he said. "He talked about the United States being a Pacific nation and a

Pacific power."

The Asia-Pacific region is vital to U.S. national security interests and will be in the future, Little said.

"We are absolutely turning toward the Asia-Pacific as a place where our strategic interests are increasingly of importance," he said. "Our partnerships ... in the region are critical. And we're going to continue to invest in those relationships."

NATO Defense, Afghanistan Withdrawal Are Key Summit Issues

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 22 May 2012

Washington — Drawing a road map for NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan and agreement on steps to increase the alliance's defense capabilities are the notable achievements of the NATO summit, President Obama said May 21 as he delivered a final assessment of the meeting held over the weekend in Chicago.

Citing an "unwavering commitment to collective defense," Obama said NATO nations agreed to invest in defense capabilities and new technologies that meet the alliance's security needs.

The 63-year-old alliance is also making progress on its missile-defense system, and Obama recognized other NATO nations for increasing their leadership in this area. "Our defense radar in Turkey will be placed under NATO control," Obama said. "Spain, Romania and Poland have agreed to host key U.S. assets. The Netherlands will be upgrading radars."

Obama also emphasized that a NATO missile-defense system is not intended to compromise Russia's strategic deterrent. "I continue to believe that missile defense can be an area of cooperation with Russia," he said.

Another important achievement of the summit was agreement to wind down the 10-year operation in Afghanistan with "a plan that trains Afghan security forces, transitions to the Afghans and builds a partnership that can endure after our combat mission in Afghanistan ends," Obama said.

The troops from NATO nations will steadily draw down as Afghan National Security Forces take the leadership role by the middle of next year, with NATO troops remaining in a support mode. By the end of 2014, Obama said, the plan calls for Afghan forces to take full responsibility for the security of their country.

But NATO involvement in Afghanistan's future will not end there, Obama said, and the partnership with Kabul to

defeat al-Qaida and bring progress to the long-beleaguered nation will continue.

Non-NATO nations have been longtime participants in the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, and they too met with NATO leaders to craft this road map to war's end. Obama called the meeting of such a wide range of nations "unprecedented"; it included 28 NATO members and 13 leaders from European, Middle Eastern, North African and Asian nations.

"Each of these countries has contributed to NATO operations in different ways – military, political, financial – and each wants to see us do more together," Obama said. "To see the breadth of those countries represented in that room is to see how NATO has truly become a hub of global security."

A key goal of the Afghanistan operation has been to expel al-Qaida from the nation and close down its safe haven there, a goal that Obama said has been met. But as the NATO summit ended, a terrorist attack in Yemen, blamed on al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), killed more than 100 people and injured close to 200, according to news reports.

A journalist questioned the U.S. president about that attack, and whether it could be a sign that Yemen is sinking into anarchy. Obama noted the strong counterterrorism partnership that the United States has formed with the Yemeni government.

"We're going to continue to work with the Yemeni government to try to identify AQAP leadership and operations and try to thwart them," Obama said. "That's important for U.S. safety. It's also important for the stability of Yemen and for the region."

Ending his briefing on a positive note, Obama saluted the city of Chicago, a first-time host to a summit of this kind. The president was not shy in expressing his pride in his hometown.

"People had a wonderful time and I think the Chicagoans that they interacted with couldn't have been more gracious and more hospitable," he said. "So I could not have been prouder."

The NATO summit was met with significant protests on the Chicago streets, with denunciations of the alliance's defense strategy and calls to end the Afghan war. But protesters did not derail the meeting; instead, Obama said, the protesters have NATO to thank for their freedoms.

"Part of what NATO defends is free speech and the

freedom of assembly," Obama said.

Secretary Clinton's Call with Aung San Suu Kyi

21 May 2012

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesperson

May 21, 2012

Readout of Secretary Clinton's Call with Aung San Suu Kyi

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton called Aung San Suu Kyi last night to review developments in Burma and to discuss the recent U.S. decision regarding sanctions. They talked about the need for specific steps to promote responsible, transparent investment, empower reformers, and target abusers. They agreed that the important progress of the past several months remains fragile and that the international community needs to help protect against backsliding. In this regard, the Secretary assured Aung San Suu Kyi that the United States is keeping its sanctions authorities in place as an insurance policy. Finally, they also discussed the urgent need for progress in resolving the ethnic conflicts and ending human rights abuses in the ethnic areas. They agreed to remain in close touch.

International and Homeland Security "Inextricably Linked"

21 May 2012

Washington – Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano is consulting with counterparts in Germany, Israel and Jordan May 18-23 on counterterrorism and other international security efforts.

"International security and homeland security are inextricably linked," Napolitano said. "We will continue to work with our international partners to strengthen and secure the global transportation systems upon which our nations' economies and communities rely."

Napolitano traveled to Munich, Germany, on May 18 to join U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and her international counterparts at the G6+1 Conference of Home Affairs Ministers to discuss efforts to combat terrorism and international piracy, and ensure a more safe, secure and resilient global supply chain. The G6+1 includes representatives from France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom (G6) as well as the United States.

While in Munich, Napolitano met German Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich, Bavarian Interior Minister

Joachim Hermann, Spanish Interior Minister Jorge Fernández Díaz, Polish Interior Minister Jacek Cichocki, British Home Minister Theresa May, Italian Interior Minister Anna Maria Cancellieri and French Interior Minister Manuel Valls. Napolitano also joined Holder, Bavarian Justice Minister Beate Merk and Hermann for a roundtable discussion on cyber-security, highlighting the importance of information sharing and cooperation to address evolving cyber-threats.

Last month, the European Parliament ratified the Passenger Name Record (PNR) agreement between the United States and the European Union. PNR is an indispensable tool in terrorism prevention efforts, the Department of Homeland Security says; PNR data has aided nearly every high-profile U.S. terrorist investigation in recent years, including those for New York City subway bomber Najibullah Zazi, Times Square bomber Faisal Shahzad, and David Headley, who was involved in the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack and was planning attacks in Europe.

Napolitano concluded her visit to Germany on May 19 by touring the Munich Police Headquarters Operations Center and paying her respects to the victims of the Holocaust at the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site.

She also traveled to Israel May 20–21, where she met with Israeli President Shimon Peres, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and her counterparts. She delivered remarks at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism on the department's collaboration with international partners to combat terrorism and facilitate trade and travel.

In Jordan, Napolitano will deliver remarks on women in security at the Columbia University Middle East Research Center and meet with King Abdullah II, Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh and her counterparts.

Admiral Says Pacific Command Priorities Reflect New Strategic Guidance

By Donna Miles | American Forces Press Service |
20 May 2012

This article was originally posted May 18 on the Defense Department website.

Washington — With clear direction from President Obama and Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta, the new U.S. Pacific Command chief said he's using the new strategic guidance as a road map as he sets priorities and engages with the region.

Navy Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III, who assumed his

post in March, said he feels fortunate to have taken command when the strategic guidance succinctly defines leadership emphasis and priorities across his vast area of responsibility.

"Every military commander wants to know what is expected of him or her and how to proceed toward the future," Locklear said during an interview with American Forces Press Service. "So the president and the secretary of defense have given me through their strategic guidance clear direction on what they want [and] what they expect to see."

The 14-page strategic guidance, released in January, recognizes challenges as well as opportunities in a region that covers 52 percent of the earth's surface and includes some 3.6 billion people in 36 nations. Asia and the Pacific, Locklear noted, represent half the world's trade, a transit point for most of its energy supplies, and home to three of the world's largest economies and most of its major militaries.

"I think the strategy is recognition that we, as an American people, are a Pacific nation," as well as an Atlantic nation, the admiral said. "We are a Pacific nation, and what happens in the Asia-Pacific matters to us. And this strategy helps reemphasize that."

In implementing the new guidance, Locklear has outlined five basic priorities for Pacom:

- Strengthen and advance alliances and partnerships;
- Mature the U.S.-China military-to-military relationship;
- Develop the U.S.-India strategic partnership;
- Remain prepared to respond to a Korean Peninsula contingency; and
- Counter transnational threats.

Alliances and partnerships are key factors for regional security and stability, Locklear said. He vowed to work to strengthen the United States' alliances with South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Australia and Thailand.

"These alliances are historic," he said. "They underpin our strategy in the region and they underpin the security arrangements in the region."

Locklear noted promising developments within these alliances, such as the new Marine rotations in Australia and improving special operations and counterterrorism capabilities in the Philippines' armed forces.

Pacom also will focus on establishing and building partnerships with other nations that share the United States' interest in security and economic prosperity and increasingly, human rights, he said.

"We are going to put more time and effort into making sure that those relationships are built for the future," the admiral said.

Locklear recognized the United States' already-strong military-to-military ties with Singapore and its "very much improving" relationships with Indonesia.

In addition, the United States wants a long-term strategic relationship with India, a large regional democracy and rising economic power that's also increasing in military capability.

"We hope to partner with them to share the strategic landscape as it applies to how we apply security to the globe that allows prosperity and peace, freedom of movement and allows prosperity in the world," the admiral said.

Locklear said he also hopes to strengthen military-to-military relations with China. China is an emerging power with many significant decisions to make, he said, adding that the United States would like to play a role in helping influence those decisions in a way that promotes a secure global environment.

"One way to do that is to communicate better," Locklear said. "The last thing you want to have is miscalculation between large militaries."

One way to build trust and confidence between those militaries, Locklear said, is through military-to-military operations.

"You learn to operate together, you learn to cooperate, you learn about each other's families. You get a personal view of each other" that can pay off in helping resolve any differences that may arise.

Locklear said North Korea looms as the most-pressing trouble spot. Its new, untested leader and its pursuit of nuclear weapons in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions and world pressure create a tenuous, unstable situation.

"If there is anything that keeps me awake at night, it's that particular situation," the admiral said. "We have to ensure that we maintain as much of a stable environment on the Korean Peninsula as we can."

Transnational threats pose another concern and area of emphasis for Pacom. Locklear identified cyber threats as the most daunting, noting the importance of secure networks not only for Pacom's military operations, but also for regional stability and economic viability.

The admiral said his command's Cyber Pacific

organization is working closely with U.S. Strategic Command and U.S. Cyber Command to identify better ways to defend Pacom's networks.

"No matter what happens out there on the Internet and Facebook, we still have to be able to operate the networks that allow us to produce combat power," Locklear said. "And so one of my priority jobs is to ensure those [command] networks will survive when they have to survive."

Terrorism is another major concern for Pacom, the admiral said, as violent extremists increasingly seek safe havens in the Asia-Pacific region. Locklear said he recognizes the need to continue adapting U.S. forces to deal with the challenge.

"In the terrorist world, as you squeeze on one side of the balloon, it pops out somewhere else. [Terrorists] look for areas of opportunity. And they find areas of opportunity in places that are disenfranchised, that have poor economies and opportunity to change the mindset of the people looking for a better life but don't know how to get it."

Locklear said the kind of environment the United States and its allies and partners in the region are working to promote is the best response.

"In the long run, the solution for that, I think, is prosperity, and the general sense of security that makes it so that these terrorist organizations can't thrive."

Locklear also noted the problem of narcotics, particularly methamphetamine production in the region, which provides the financing for terrorists to operate.

"We are seeing an increasing amount of that activity. And that money, we know, goes to the terrorist organizations," he said. "So we are going to have to make sure we keep our focus pretty tightly on this, because that transnational threat is equal or more damaging to our national security than any of the others."

In leading Pacom's response to these threats, Locklear noted the positive impact of more than six decades of U.S. presence in the region.

"The U.S. military presence in the Asia-Pacific has provided the security infrastructure that basically underpins the security environment which has led to an environment that allowed ... emerging economies [and] emerging nations to thrive — from Japan to Korea to Australia to the Philippines to China, to the U.S.," Locklear said. "We are part of that."

Pacom's activities today will have a long-term impact for

the future, the admiral said.

“We have tremendous interest that will carry forward, not just to the near term, but to our children and our grandchildren and their children,” he said.

Secretary Clinton Urges Sri Lanka to Make Reconciliation Plans Public

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 18 May 2012

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the United States wants to be a supportive partner in Sri Lanka’s reconciliation and reconstruction efforts following decades of conflict between the government and Tamil rebels.

Speaking with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Gamini Lakshman Peiris ahead of their meeting at the State Department May 18, Clinton said the Obama administration “strongly supports the process of reconciliation and reconstruction” in the country and that Sri Lanka enjoys strong and independent ties with the United States.

“We were encouraged to see the end of a very long, bloody, terrible conflict, and look forward to working with Sri Lanka as they pursue their commitment to a better future for all the people,” she said.

Following the meeting, State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters Foreign Minister Peiris had presented Clinton with “a very serious and comprehensive approach” to the implementation of recommendations from Sri Lanka’s Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), appointed by President Mahinda Rajapaksa in 2011 to investigate and address the issues that led to the 1983–2009 conflict.

Peiris told Clinton about the Sri Lankan government’s plans with regard to the LLRC, such as making public, “both to Sri Lankans and to those outside Sri Lanka, what the government intends to do in the implementation round,” Nuland said.

The secretary reportedly encouraged Sri Lankan authorities to have a “really transparent, open public process, not only on the LLRC specifically and its implementation, but also with regard to accountability,” Nuland said, so that public confidence in its reconciliation efforts will be strengthened both inside and outside Sri Lanka, as well as to help “speed the healing of the country.”

According to Nuland, Clinton told Peiris, “Good plan. Now you really need to make it public. Now you really need to show your people [and] the world the concrete

implementation steps going forward.”

She also stressed the importance of demilitarizing the northern part of the country and holding provincial elections there, as well as the protection of human rights, including the protection of the press, having the government create space for Sri Lankan civil society, and “generally the creation of an environment that is inclusive,” Nuland said.

Ahead of his meeting with Clinton, Peiris said there is an “intimate connection between reconciliation and economic development” in Sri Lanka, and “any realistic process of reconciliation must focus upon economic factors” with “a certain threshold of economic contentment and well-being, and emphasis on access to livelihoods and incomes.”

If Sri Lanka’s reconciliation process is to be successful, “it must reflect sensitivity to the aspirations of our people. It must have a homegrown polity,” so the majority of the people can identify with the process and allow it to “come alive in their hearts and minds,” he said.

Peiris said that with the return of peace and tranquility in Sri Lanka, “there is abundant scope for building further upon the relationship that is already very strong and vibrant” between Sri Lanka and the United States.

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