

American

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Republicans, Democrats Unite to Oppose Internet Rules

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 31 May 2012

Washington — A proposal to increase Internet regulation by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) or some other arm of the U.N. system is bringing unanimity among the various power centers in the U.S. government. Republicans, Democrats, the Obama administration, the industry and the community of nonprofit groups devoted to the Internet all oppose change in the current governance structure that is fundamentally based in the private sector.

Bipartisan members of the House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee have put their views to paper, introducing a “resolution to preserve and protect a global Internet free from government control.” The resolution awaits broader approval from both houses of the U.S. Congress.

“The Internet has become this economic and social juggernaut not because governmental actors willed it to be so,” said Representative Fred Upton, a Republican from Michigan, “but because the government took a step back and let the private sector drive its evolution.”

Upton is quoted in a committee press release that also cites Representative Henry Waxman, a Democrat from California, as a supporter of the current Internet “bottom-up” governance system, involving engineers, academics, user groups and industry, and emphasizing consensus in decisionmaking.

“Both the current and past administrations deserve credit for their efforts to ensure that the Internet remains a tool for the global dissemination of ideas, information and commerce,” Waxman said in the press release.

These often divergent U.S. factions further agree on why broader international regulation of the Internet is a bad idea. They foresee that it would have two adverse consequences.

“It inevitably would diminish the dynamism of the Internet,” said Philip Verveer, deputy assistant secretary of state and the U.S. coordinator for international communications and information policy. Verveer testified before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology at a May 31 hearing.

The dynamism of the Internet is of special significance for the developing world because advanced information technologies are expanding economic opportunities as farmers, craft makers and manufacturers are gaining access to bigger markets. And turning up the volume on

voices from the developing world will probably also be good for the industrialized world, witnesses said.

“The next Facebook,” for example, “could come from the developing world,” said Robert McDowell, a commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission, first appointed to the regulatory panel by President George W. Bush and reappointed by President Obama. McDowell also testified at the hearing.

The other reason for U.S. opposition to broader international regulation is the concern that it would squelch freedom of expression, Verveer said, “the most noxious of which would be censorship or content controls by repressive regimes.”

Today’s Internet, with its precise technical protocols and crowd-based etiquette, has developed as it has through the efforts of various groups with individual and different interests in the enterprise. Verveer named the Internet Society, the Internet Engineering Task Force, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, and the World Wide Web Consortium.

These are organizations with great expertise and commitment to the current state and the future of the Internet, Verveer said.

“It would be inappropriate to assign the ITU a role beyond the bounds of its technical competence, let alone to assign it responsibilities for the Internet’s evolving architecture or mechanisms for economic integration,” Verveer told the subcommittee.

While some subcommittee members theorized about the possibility of a power grab by an international body, McDowell also warned of “insidious and seemingly innocuous expansions of intergovernmental powers.”

Almost 200 nations are members of the ITU, an organization founded when the telegraph was new. In December, member nations will meet in Dubai for the World Conference on International Telecommunications to consider renegotiation of the more-than-20-year-old International Telecommunications Regulations, which do not grant jurisdiction over the Internet to the ITU.

McDowell said the State Department is building a coalition of democratic states that will oppose any attempt to tighten regulatory measures around the Internet. The United States encourages governments to work within the current multistakeholder regulatory regime to achieve their goals, and it has won an endorsement of that approach from the 34 member nations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Verveer said the United States is convening a delegation of officials who will present the government's arguments against Internet regulation to the Dubai world conference.

Two Cities Prepare for Presidential Nominating Conventions

By Mark Trainer | Staff Writer | 31 May 2012

Washington — The final sprint to the U.S. presidential election begins when the two major political parties throw two major parties: the Republican and the Democratic national conventions.

When Republicans gather in Tampa, Florida, the week of August 27 and Democrats in Charlotte, North Carolina, the week of September 3, each party will rally around its nominee in the final run-up to the November election. But what do the conventions mean for the cities that host them?

Cities vying for the conventions have to balance the benefits of national attention and increased tourist revenue against the logistical challenge presented by transport, lodging and security for the vast influx of people concentrated in a relatively small area around the event.

As is the case for a party's nominee, the hardest work began after Charlotte and Tampa won the bidding to host the 2012 conventions.

Congress appropriates \$50 million to each hosting city for security costs. The convention's organizers work with the Secret Service and the Department of Homeland Security to plan crowd management and transportation logistics. Tampa officials plan to have 3,000 to 4,000 police officers on duty each day of the convention. Since this is more than double the city's standing police force, much of the federal money goes to hiring police from other areas.

But the hosting cities must also raise money for necessary improvements. Organizers in Charlotte will have to raise \$50 million to upgrade the Time Warner Cable Arena, where the first three days of the convention will take place, and for other improvements. The political parties pay close attention to fundraising capacity before choosing a host city.

In Tampa, hotel managers are keeping on employees for the summer, a slow time during which they usually reduce staff. Republican convention organizers have reserved 16,000 rooms at about 100 area hotels. The Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay has launched a \$16 million pre-convention renovation. "We're absolutely hoping this will translate into future business," manager Paul Joseph told the Tampa Tribune.

The Democratic National Convention, held in Denver in 2008, brought that city an estimated \$160 million and 50,000 visitors. Similarly, the Republicans' 2008 convention in Minneapolis-St. Paul brought \$170 million and 45,000 visitors to the area, with hotel occupancy rising 45 percent from the previous year. "There's no doubt that putting on an event of this magnitude put us on the map," said Mayor Gene Winstead of nearby Bloomington, Minnesota, said in September 2009, "and we know that our community will reap the benefits of hosting the convention for years to come."

U.S. Sanctions Syrian Bank to Isolate Assad Regime

30 May 2012

Washington — The United States has taken new action to isolate Syria's Assad regime from the international financial system by sanctioning the Syria International Islamic Bank (SIIB).

The U.S. Department of the Treasury announced May 30 that it had sanctioned the bank for acting for or on behalf of the Commercial Bank of Syria and providing services to the Syrian Lebanese Commercial Bank, both of which are subject to U.S. and international sanctions.

"Today's action will add to the economic pressure on the Assad regime by closing off a key evasion route," said Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen.

"The Treasury Department, working with others around the world who share our goal of ending the brutal repression of the Syrian people, will continue to close off the Assad regime's access to the international financial system," Cohen said.

SIIB has acted as a front for the Commercial Bank of Syria, which has allowed that bank — Syria's largest commercial bank — to circumvent sanctions against it by the United States, the European Union and the Arab League.

The executive order on which the sanctions are based aims to freeze the assets of proliferators of weapons of mass destruction and their supporters and isolate them from the U.S. financial and commercial systems. The sanctions generally prohibit transactions between the designees and any U.S. person and freeze any assets the designees may have under U.S. jurisdiction.

SIIB was established in Damascus in September 2007 and has 20 branches and three representative offices throughout Syria. From 2011 to 2012, SIIB surreptitiously facilitated financing worth almost \$150 million on behalf of the Commercial Bank of Syria. Financial arrangements that were purportedly made by SIIB were actually made

by the Commercial Bank of Syria.

In addition to working with the Commercial Bank of Syria to circumvent sanctions, in 2012, SIIB facilitated several substantial payments for the Syrian Lebanese Commercial Bank and facilitated a payment from this bank, which has also been sanctioned, to “an entity of proliferation concern,” a Treasury Department news release said.

The Treasury Department sanctioned the Commercial Bank of Syria and its subsidiary, Syrian Lebanese Commercial Bank, based on the Commercial Bank of Syria’s support to entities related to Syrian and North Korean proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The Treasury Department said it is working closely with partners in the international community to isolate the Assad regime. The United States consulted with the government of Qatar regarding the most recent sanctions, and Qatar is taking corresponding actions.

“We commend the Government of Qatar for its important regional and international role in maintaining economic pressure on the Assad regime. Today's action does not target the Qatari investors who hold investments in SIIB,” the Treasury Department said.

On June 6, Treasury will host in Washington the second meeting of the Friends of the Syrian People International Working Group on Sanctions. The meeting, which the United States will co-chair with the governments of Turkey and Qatar, will focus on ways to further strengthen international sanctions against the Syrian regime.

President Obama Honors Outstanding Civilians

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 29 May 2012

Washington — President Obama awarded the Medal of Freedom to 13 people who have made extraordinary contributions to the county and the world.

The Medal of Freedom is the nation’s highest civilian honor, presented to individuals who have made especially meritorious contributions to the security or national interests of the United States, to world peace, or to cultural or other significant public or private endeavors.

“What sets these men and women apart,” Obama said at the White House awards ceremony May 29, “is the incredible impact they’ve had on so many people.”

The honorees, he said, “have moved us with their words and inspired us with their actions.”

Obama called the honorees “my heroes individually. ...

Everybody on this stage has impacted my life in profound ways. ... Their impact will continue for generations to come.”

The Presidential Medal of Freedom recipients are:

Madeleine Albright – The first woman to hold the position of U.S. secretary of state, she served from 1997 to 2001. From 1993 to 1997, she was the U.S. representative to the United Nations. She chairs the National Democratic Institute and is president of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation.

John Doar – Leader of federal efforts to protect civil rights during the 1960s, he served as assistant attorney general in charge of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. Doar, the president said, “laid the groundwork for civil rights. ... He gave the civil rights movement reason not to give up on those in power.”

Bob Dylan – One of the most influential American musicians of the 20th century, Dylan’s work had considerable influence on the civil rights movement of the 1960s and has had significant impact on American culture over the past five decades.

William Foege – A physician and epidemiologist, Foege helped lead the successful campaign to eradicate smallpox in the 1970s. He was appointed director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1977 and, with colleagues, founded the Task Force for Child Survival in 1984.

John Glenn – In 1962, Glen became the first American to orbit the Earth. In 1998, he became the oldest person to visit space at the age of 77. In between he served as a U.S. senator and was an architect and sponsor of the 1978 Nonproliferation Act.

Gordon Hirabayashi – Hirabayashi, who died on January 2, 2012, openly defied the forced relocation and internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Convicted by the U.S. Federal District Court in Seattle of defying the exclusion order and violating curfew, Hirabayashi appealed his conviction all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled against him in 1943. Following World War II and his time in prison, Hirabayashi obtained his doctoral degree in sociology and became a professor. In 1987, his conviction was overturned by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. The United States, the president said, is better off for citizens like Hirabayashi who are willing to stand up for their rights.

Dolores Huerta – With Cesar Chavez, Huerta co-founded the National Farmworkers Association in 1962, which later became the United Farm Workers of America. She

was influential in securing the passage of California's Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975 and disability insurance for farm workers in California.

Jan Karski – Karski served as an officer in the Polish Underground during World War II and carried the first eyewitness accounts of the Holocaust to the world. He described his experiences in his book *Story of a Secret State*. After the war he immigrated to the United States, became a U.S. citizen and taught as a professor at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service. He died in 2002.

Juliette Gordon Low – Born in 1860, Low founded the Girl Scouts in 1912. The organization strives to teach girls self-reliance and resourcefulness. Since 1912, the Girl Scouts has grown into the largest educational organization for girls and has had more than 50 million members.

Toni Morrison – One of America's most celebrated novelists, Morrison is renowned for works such as *Song of Solomon*, *Jazz*, and *Beloved*, for which she won a Pulitzer Prize in 1988. She became the first African-American woman to win a Nobel Prize in 1993. Morrison's prose, Obama said, "gives us moral and emotional intensity."

Shimon Peres – An ardent advocate for Israel's security and for peace, Peres was elected the ninth president of Israel in 2007. Along with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, Peres won the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize for his work as foreign minister during the Middle East peace talks that led to the Oslo Accords. Peres, Obama said, "has done more for the cause of peace in the Middle East than anybody alive."

John Paul Stevens – The third longest-serving justice in the U.S. Supreme Court's history when he retired in 2010, Stevens' work has left a lasting imprint on the law in areas such as civil rights, the First Amendment, the death penalty, administrative law, and the separation of powers.

Pat Summitt – Summitt is the all-time winningest college sports coach in the United States. Off the basketball court, she has been a spokesperson against Alzheimer's disease.

Special Operations Delegates from 96 Nations Meet in Florida

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

This article was originally posted on May 24 to the Department of Defense website.

Washington – Special operations delegates from 96 nations gathered May 22 in Tampa, Florida, for a

conference that U.S. Special Operations Command (Socom) hosts every few years.

Navy Admiral William H. McRaven, Socom's commander, and his counterparts from Australia and Colombia briefed the press on the final day of the international gathering.

The conference "is always a tremendous opportunity for us to get our partners, our allies, our friends from around the globe to come and interact with each other," McRaven said, adding that this year's theme was "Building the Global SOF Partnership."

McRaven was joined by Major General Peter Warwick Gilmore, special operations commander Australia, and Brigadier General Juan Pablo Rodriguez Barragán, commander of the Comando Conjunto De Operaciones Especiales in Colombia.

At a gala dinner May 23, keynote speaker Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton thanked conference attendees for keeping the United States and other nations safe and strong.

"Your service is making the world safer for people to be who they are, to live their lives in peace and harmony," Clinton said. "That is going to be the challenge of the 21st century."

Knowing that U.S. Special Operations forces and their partners are at the point of the spear, she added, "I think it's a pretty good bet that [we will] once and for all recognize our common humanity and stand together against the forces of darkness."

McRaven said he appreciated Clinton's remarks about how U.S. special operations and allied special operations partners do business.

"There is always a desire on the part of the media to pick up on those very dynamic news-making operations we do – the raids [and] the hostage rescues," he said. "But as Secretary Clinton pointed out," McRaven continued, "that's really less of what we do, than building the partner capacity, establishing relationships, helping other nations ... the softer side of special operations, where we can get ahead of the problem ... by dealing with our partners [and] by allowing our partner nations to deal with their own security problems."

McRaven told reporters it's been a great week to exchange ideas, along with the tactics, techniques and procedures of different nations' special operators.

In one capability exercise, he said, 10 different nations were involved "in jumping out of airplanes, fast-roping,

doing mock raids, all in an effort to continue to build this partnership.”

The conference also allowed international special operations forces to engage with industry partners, with support from the National Defense Industrial Agency, McRaven added.

Conducting special operations exercises with international partners provides “the opportunity to engage globally and to understand the challenges that exist around the world,” Gilmore said. Participation in such exercises, he added, also gives his troops the chance “to see the different approaches to managing stability and security on a global scale is a really valuable opportunity.”

Rodriguez thanked the U.S. government, and especially U.S. special operations forces, for help in neutralizing the terrorist activities of his nation’s long-time adversary, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, or FARC.

“The situation in Colombia is very different [today] because our democracy now has support from the other countries, but especially from the United States,” the brigadier general said.

Terrorism will continue to be a threat into the future, Rodriguez said.

“The only way you can neutralize terrorist action,” he said, “is [by] working together, [cooperating with all countries], integrating our intelligence and working together.”

Taking questions from the press, McRaven and his counterparts discussed a range of topics, including special operations in Afghanistan after 2014 and the mind-set of special operations forces.

“We right now have a plan to be in Afghanistan after 2014 in an advise-and-assist role to the Afghans,” the admiral said. “I do not know right now what the size of the U.S. special operations force will be ... the details of that are still being worked [between] senior members in our government and the Afghan government and the coalition.”

Special operations forces members are “very proud, and they put a lot of effort into their direct-action capability,” McRaven said. “This is an important capability for any nation, to be able to rescue its citizens, to eliminate threats to a nation, irrespective of the country.”

For that reason, he added, all special operations forces “train to an exceedingly high standard, to do the direct-action piece.”

But most of the time, the admiral said, special operations forces do other kinds of work, sometimes called military assistance or security force assistance or partner-nation capacity building.

For these jobs, special operations forces have a small footprint and consist of what McRaven called “a handful of guys who speak the language, who know the culture, who earn a position to be able to partner with a host nation at their request ... working through the U.S. mission, the State Department, and geographic combatant commanders.”

This great capability of special operations forces is important, cost-effective and a great return on the investment, the admiral said, “in allowing the host nation to develop its own capability to deal with its own security problems.”

The point, he said, “is to get ahead of the problem, or as we tend to say, left of the boom.”

The admiral explained, “If this is where things really go bad, what we want to be able to do is engage with the host nation very early on to build up their capability and allow them to deal with the problem, so we don't get to the point where it goes boom.”

Legal Protections Avert Extinction of Rare Crocodile

26 May 2012

Washington — A Western Hemisphere reptile has reason to smile, thanks to decades of international cooperation to ensure its survival.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced May 23 it will remove the Morelet’s crocodile from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife under the Endangered Species Act, effective June 22, because the species has recovered significantly.

The Morelet’s crocodile, found in Mexico, Belize and Guatemala, was named after a French naturalist, P.M.A. Morelet, who discovered the species in Mexico in 1850. This crocodile species is smaller than others, with most wild adults usually ranging in length from 2 to 2.6 meters. It lives in freshwater environments such as lakes, swamps and slow-moving rivers.

The majority of the Morelet’s crocodile population is in Mexico and Belize (87 percent), and those two countries hold the majority of the potentially suitable habitat (81 percent) throughout the species’ range. Guatemala contains the remaining 13 percent of the wild Morelet’s crocodiles and the remaining 19 percent of the potentially suitable habitat.

The United States listed the Morelet's crocodile as endangered throughout its entire range on June 2, 1970. On July 1, 1975, the international community recognized the dire threat to the species by listing it in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

That international treaty, to which the United States is one of the original signatories, aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. CITES' Appendix I lists species threatened with extinction that are or might be affected by trade and bans trade in specimens of these species except in very unusual circumstances.

Overharvest for commercial purposes was the primary reason for the Morelet's crocodile being protected by the United States and included in CITES.

The protections worked. As a result of the species' improved status, on March 18, 2010, at a conference of parties to CITES, the Morelet's crocodile populations in Mexico and Belize were transferred to CITES Appendix II, which relaxed some protections while continuing to prohibit trade in wild specimens for commercial purposes.

Listing in Appendix II indicates a species is not threatened with imminent extinction but still needs trade to be controlled to avoid uses incompatible with survival. The new CITES Appendix II designation for Morelet's crocodile took effect June 23, 2010, but, at Guatemala's request, its populations of Morelet's crocodiles remained listed in CITES Appendix I.

Currently, international commercial trade in Morelet's crocodiles under CITES is limited to individuals derived from sources other than the wild (for example, captive-breeding operations).

After June 22, Morelet's crocodile parts and products originating from captive-breeding operations in Mexico (and Belize, if any) may be imported into the United States for commercial purposes, as long as the exporting country finds the export will not be detrimental to the species, the specimen was lawfully acquired and the required CITES export permit or re-export certificate has been issued.

This crocodile is one of thousands of species for which the United States' Endangered Species Act provides a critical safety net. It has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species across the nation and internationally, and promoted the recovery of many others.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service collaborates with conservation partners domestically and internationally to

identify and implement innovative approaches to conserve and recover imperiled species.

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