

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Secretary Clinton Praises Global Counterterrorism Efforts at Istanbul Forum

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 07 June 2012

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says global counterterrorism efforts are making a significant difference in keeping citizens safe, and she is calling on countries around the world to continue to stand together in the fight against violent extremism.

“We’ve worked together to disrupt terrorist financing; pass new and more effective counterterrorism laws; tighten border, aviation and maritime security; and improve international coordination,” Clinton said at the Global Counterterrorism Forum ministerial meeting in Istanbul June 7.

During the past decade, more than 120,000 suspected terrorists have been arrested around the world and more than 35,000 have been convicted, Clinton said. Terrorist group al-Qaida is “on the path to defeat” following the 2011 death of leader Osama bin Laden.

“Our citizens are safer because of the work we have done together,” Clinton said. “But despite this progress, the danger from terrorism remains urgent and undeniable.”

The secretary said the threat of terror has spread to become more geographically diverse, and extremist groups are now “actively encouraging lone-wolf terrorists” to carry out attacks and killing sprees.

“Just as the threat we face crosses borders and oceans, so must our response,” she said. “We need a strategic, comprehensive approach to counterterrorism that integrates both military and civilian power, that uses intelligence, law enforcement, diplomacy, development, humanitarian assistance and every possible partner and asset.”

Clinton said defeating terrorist networks requires more than simply removing insurgents from the battlefield. The global community needs to attack finances, recruitment and safe havens; take on extremist ideology and diminish its appeal to young people; improve conditions for women’s security; and continue to help build the capacities of nations working to take on the fight.

She said the Global Counterterrorism Forum emphasizes strengthening civilian institutions as a critical part of its strategy, and that the group will continue to work together to defeat ideologies of hatred and violence.

Clinton applauded the United Arab Emirates for announcing the creation of the first international center to combat extremism and develop best practices to blunt the

spread of radicalization. She said the United States will support the center, scheduled to open in Abu Dhabi later in 2012, with both funding and expertise.

The secretary said strengthening the rule of law is another critical way to stem the spread of extremism, and she commended the pledge of more than \$90 million to provide rule-of-law training for police, prosecutors, judges and prison officials in countries working to step up their counterterrorism efforts. She said the United States is contributing \$15 million to the effort, which will also include a focus on rehabilitating and reintegrating violent extremist offenders in prison.

She added that political revolutions across the Middle East and North Africa have “struck a devastating blow to the extremists’ ideology.” As citizens claim their universal rights, demand more accountable governments and seek broader economic opportunities, Clinton said, they gain the potential to transform and improve counterterrorism efforts across the region.

Clinton, who co-chaired the counterterrorism forum along with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, said the group’s work remains essential for keeping up with the ever-changing threat of extremism.

“We’re here because we face implacable foes who are determined to kill civilians, disrupt societies and spread their ideology of hate,” she said. “All of us share a commitment to take on this challenge, and the United States is very proud to continue working with you to further our common efforts.”

The secretary’s visit to Turkey came as the last stop on a seven-nation tour that began May 31. Before her arrival in Istanbul, Clinton visited Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. She is scheduled to depart for Washington following the forum June 7.

Reports of Killings near Hama “Outrageous,” White House Says

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 07 June 2012

Washington – The Obama administration says “multiple credible sources” have reported the targeted killings of Syrian civilians, including women and children, near the city of Hama and describes the murders as “outrageous,” urging the international community to unite around a plan that will offer Syrians a democratic, representative and inclusive government.

White House press secretary Jay Carney condemned the reported killings in Al-Qubeir in a June 7 statement and said that when coupled with the refusal of Bashar al-Assad’s regime to allow U.N. peace observers into the area to verify witness accounts, the reports are “an affront

to human dignity and justice.”

“Assad’s continued abdication of responsibility for these horrific acts has no credibility and only further underscores the illegitimate and immoral nature of his rule,” Carney said.

He added there is “no justification” for the regime’s “continued defiance of its obligations” that it agreed to under U.N. special envoy Kofi Annan’s peace plan, which calls for an end to violence, unhindered access for humanitarian agencies and international media, the release of detainees and the start of an inclusive political dialogue with the Syrian opposition.

“The future of Syria will be determined by the Syrian people, and the international community must come together in support of their legitimate aspirations,” Carney said, calling on all countries to “abandon support for this brutal and illegitimate regime, and to join together to support a political transition in Syria — one that upholds the promise of a future for which far too many have already died.”

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told reporters in Turkey June 7 that the violence outside Hama was “simply unconscionable,” saying Assad has “doubled down on his brutality and duplicity.”

She said Syria will not and cannot be “peaceful, stable or certainly democratic until Assad goes,” and “the time has come for the international community to unite around a plan for post-Assad Syria.”

The Assad regime must implement all six points of the Annan plan, “including a real cease-fire agreed to and observed by all parties,” she said, and the Syrian leader must also “transfer power and depart Syria.”

Clinton also called for an interim representative government to be established through negotiation, and for a transition phase to result in “a democratic, representative and inclusive government,” with civilian control of the military, security forces that will respect the rule of law, and equality “for all Syrians regardless of background.”

The international community needs to unite “behind a plan that is achievable and keeps faith with those inside Syria who are protesting and demonstrating, suffering, and dying for their universal human rights,” she said.

It is important for the international community to give the Annan plan “the last amount of support that we can muster because in order to bring others into a frame of mind to take action in the Security Council, there has to be a final recognition that it’s not working,” she said.

“We’re disgusted by what we see happening. But we know that the hard work ahead requires getting more and more people to agree with us that there must be a transition and to help facilitate it,” Clinton said.

State Department deputy spokesman Mark Toner told reporters June 7 that the Annan plan is “a good plan” that needs to be implemented.

He called on Russia and China to support implementation “so that we can bring the right amount of pressure to bear on Assad.”

The situation in Syria is having spillover effects in Turkey, Lebanon and elsewhere, and it is now “clearly in the purview of the U.N. Security Council,” he said.

“This is what the U.N. Security Council was created for, to deal with these kinds of situations,” Toner said.

At the U.N. General Assembly June 7, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Syria and the United Nations are now “at a pivotal moment,” warning that the situation inside the country and the region “can quickly move from tipping point to breaking point,” with an “imminent and real” threat of full-scale civil war.

U.N. observers are working to get to the scene of the killings outside Hama; Ban said that in addition to being initially denied access to the area, they were shot at.

He said there is “too little evidence” that the Assad regime is living up to its commitments under the Annan plan, and Annan himself confirmed to the General Assembly June 7 that his plan is not being implemented.

“It is your shared interest, and our collective responsibility, to act quickly. The process cannot be open-ended. The longer we wait, the more radicalized and polarized the situation will become, and the harder it will be to forge a political settlement,” Annan said.

He said the actions or interventions of individual countries will not resolve the crisis and called on the international community to “act as one.”

“As we demand compliance with international law and the six-point plan, it must be made clear that there will be consequences if compliance is not forthcoming,” Annan said.

Biodiversity Is Crucial to Sustainability, Scientists Report

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 07 June 2012

Washington — More than 1,000 environmental studies conducted over the last 20 years led an international

group of scientists to conclude that a decline in biological diversity reduces the productivity and sustainability of ecosystems.

The group, including American, Canadian, French and British researchers, published its findings in the June 7 edition of *Nature*, the international science publication.

The scientists also report their consensus that declining biodiversity decreases ecosystems' ability to provide humankind with the raw materials and services that support us: food, wood and fertile soil, for example.

"Water purity, food production and air quality are easy to take for granted, but all are largely provided by communities of organisms," said George Gilchrist of the National Science Foundation's Division of Environmental Biology, the financial backer of the research.

The scientific group concludes that the variety of species and the diversity of genetic traits and characteristics that they bring to an ecosystem are critical to its balance.

The research also shows that human actions leading to species extinctions cause ecosystem breakdown in many places at a faster rate than is recorded in the fossil record.

"This is a consensus statement that loss of Earth's wild species will be harmful to the world's ecosystems and may harm society by reducing ecosystem services that are essential to human health and prosperity," said the University of Michigan's Bradley Cardinale, who is the lead author of the *Nature* article, "Biodiversity Loss and its Impact on Humanity." Cardinale specializes in ecosystem study in the university's School of Natural Resources and Environment.

Ecosystems are more abundant in producing those goods and services when their natural genetic diversity has been left intact. Drawing on the broad range of research conducted on this topic since the Convention on Biological Diversity took force in 1993, the article finds that crop yields are greater, wood plantations produce more and fisheries' yields are sustained when a diverse range of organisms coexist in an ecosystem.

Among plants, diversity supports greater resistance to invasion by non-native species, inhibits plant pathogens and increases the capability of biomass to absorb carbon dioxide, the article says.

"Biodiversity underpins our ability to achieve sustainable development," said paper co-author Shahid Naeem of Columbia University.

The article is published as the United Nations prepares to convene a conference on sustainable development in Rio

de Janeiro June 20-22. The meeting is known as Rio+20, commemorating the first Earth Summit held in that city in 1992. That meeting set the stage for the accession to the Convention on Biodiversity by 193 nations.

The authors of this scientific report urge nations of the world to make biodiversity preservation an international priority to prevent further extinctions, preserve what still exists, and perhaps restore some of the life forms that have been severely diminished.

Women Honored as Defenders of Democracy, Human Rights

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 06 June 2012

Washington – Giving a livelihood to an impoverished woman; making a film to expose families who give away their daughters to pay a debt; or rebuilding the lives of young women who have served as soldiers or prostitutes since childhood.

These are the acts of women who are providing the leadership for change in troubled communities around the world. They are women who are recognized with Global Leadership Awards from the organization Vital Voices, which works in more than 140 countries to help women strengthen democracy, increase economic opportunity and protect human rights.

Vital Voices President Alyse Nelson said the nine women honored in 2012 have given their communities the right leadership at the right time.

"That inclusiveness, that cause-driven-ness, that ability to cross lines that usually divide," Nelson said, "those abilities are exactly what our world needs to heal."

Nelson spoke June 5 in Washington at the U.S. Institute of Peace, a day before the honorees will accept their awards in a ceremony at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Honoree Samar Minallah Khan of Pakistan studied anthropology but became a documentary filmmaker to expose the rural customs that violated the rights of women.

"I realized that if you take these documentaries to the communities, to the rural areas, and used them as a tool to generate awareness and dialogue, that would actually help in breaking silence around issues that we usually don't talk about publicly or openly," Khan told an Institute of Peace audience.

Giving daughters away to serve as compensation on a debt or to settle disputes is known in Afghanistan and Pakistan as *swara*, which had been openly practiced for

generations. Thanks in part to Khan's film, Pakistani legislators voted in 2004 to abolish the practice.

Khan has also produced documentary films on human trafficking, child domestic labor and the importance of education for girls.

In Liberia, 2,000 girl soldiers turned in their arms to U.N. peacekeepers at the end of a 14-year civil war. Rosana Schaack was a nurse-turned-activist who helped rehabilitate those young soldiers, some of whom were as young as 7 when they were abducted by a rebel army.

"They were used as wives; they were sex slaves, they were young mothers," Schaack said. She formed a nonprofit organization, Touching Humanity in Need of Kindness (THINK Inc.) to help address Liberia's post-war problems.

THINK provided a range of services to help veteran child soldiers integrate back into normal life, including shelter, medical care, counseling, education and life-skills training.

The struggle to earn a basic living in the small Pacific Island of Samoa was once so challenging that young people left their homes and moved to other places for jobs. Adimaimalaga Tafuna'i wanted to stop that cycle of emigration with a way for village people to generate income to better educate, feed and care for their families.

Identifying and cultivating the products that thrive only in a tropical climate was the key, and Tafuna'i established a business promotion organization to help village people find bigger markets for goods such as coconut oil and noni juice. The Samoans established what Tafuna'i calls "a really great relationship" with The Body Shop, a U.K.-based company specializing in skin, cosmetic and grooming products made from natural ingredients.

"The quantities that they require keeps growing and we need to look more outside Samoa, which is what we are doing now and trying to establish relationships with other small Pacific countries," Tafuna'i told the Institute of Peace audience.

Women in Business Development Inc. was successful in Samoa, Tafuna'i said, because it was established by Samoans who understand the culture and were willing to listen to the villagers. Too often, she said, well-intended business people go to small countries with visions of speeding development using inappropriate methods that may have been successful elsewhere, but not among small, isolated populations found in Pacific island nations.

Vital Voices also honors women who played roles in

various countries involved in the 2011 Arab Spring movement. Libyan human rights lawyer Salwa Bugaighis had a longstanding record of defending political prisoners and was an organizer of the demonstrations in Benghazi that served as the impetus that ultimately led to the end of Muammar Qadhafi's regime.

She recalled standing in a crowd at an early demonstration and hearing word that a young man had been killed by Qadhafi troops close to where she stood. "At that time, it turned from protesting to revolution," Bugaighis said. "You did not feel fear inside you. You want to go to finish your mission."

Bugaighis was a member of Libya's National Transitional Council, but resigned the post after several months to protest what she perceived as a lack of women in the new government.

Vital Voices recognized the leadership of several other women also:

Ruth Zavaleta Salgado, a Mexican politician; Shatha Al-Harazi, a Yemeni journalist; Manal al-Sharif, a women's rights activist from Saudi Arabia; Marianne Nagui Hanna Ibrahim, an Egyptian advocate of human rights and social peace; and Amira Yahyaoui, a blogger and an advocate for greater freedom of expression in her native Tunisia.

"Generation Praguers" Hold 2012 Meeting on Weapon Reductions

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 06 June 2012

Washington — The Cold War may be over, but the weapons of mass destruction live on, and they too must be eradicated. That was the message that President Obama delivered in Hradčany Square in Prague on April 5, 2009.

"So today, I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. I'm not naïve. The goal will not be reached quickly — perhaps not in my lifetime. It will take patience and persistence. But now we, too, must ignore the voices who tell us that the world cannot change. We have to insist, 'Yes, we can,'" he said.

The throng that had gathered in the square that day erupted in applause. Since then, young people around the world who have embraced that goal have become known as "Generation Prague." To keep the message alive, the United States hosts an annual Generation Prague conference.

Alexandra Bell, who works in the State Department's Bureau of Arms Control, Compliance and Verification, opened this year's conference in Washington June 4 with

two other lines from the president's speech: "I know that a call to arms can stir the souls of men and women more than a call to lay them down. But that is why the voices for peace and progress must be raised together."

With that, she welcomed about 150 GenPraguers to a daylong conference of presentations and discussions about advancing the goal of getting rid of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Acting Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller brought the GenPraguers up to date on U.S.-Russia negotiations to reduce the U.S. and Russian stockpiles of nuclear weapons. She said implementation of arms reduction agreements is proceeding well, symbolized by the arrival of a team of Russian weapons inspectors in the United States the day of the conference. She added that negotiations with Russia to reduce the size of conventional forces have been a "quiet success" as weapons arsenals today are much smaller than in the past.

She said the United States is now doing its homework on how to proceed on three fronts: deployed long-range, strategic weapons; long-range, strategic weapons that are in storage but can be prepared quickly for use; and short-range, tactical nuclear weapons.

Gottemoeller, the top arms control negotiator in the Obama administration, said there are many careers available in the field of arms control. She extended a particular invitation to women to apply. A large number of female GenPraguers stood up to ask questions, suggesting that many women are eager to accept the invitation.

Erlan Idrissov, Kazakhstan's ambassador to the United States, told the GenPraguers how his central Asian country, once the world's fourth largest military power with more weapons than Britain, France and China combined, eliminated its nuclear arsenal and in so doing enhanced its security and economic well-being.

Tom Countryman, assistant secretary of state for international security and nonproliferation, spoke about the dangers posed by nuclear smugglers and of the efforts to interdict them. He also told the GenPraguers about work to prevent the spread of biological and toxic weapons.

Andrew Shapiro, the head of the State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, told the GenPraguers about efforts to get rid of another Cold War relic that terrorists and pirates are plotting to get their hands on: shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles. If a terrorist could shoot down just one commercial aircraft, it would have a

devastating economic impact because people would be afraid to travel to the country where the terrorist attack occurred, Shapiro said.

Throughout the day, GenPraguers heard speaker after speaker explain complex challenges and opportunities in disarmament work, in government, international organizations and nonprofit groups.

One GenPraguer, a graduate student in nuclear engineering, said he hopes to find work as a weapons inspector after he completes his degree. Another, a staffer in the U.S. Senate, said she studied arms issues at university and plans to pursue a career related to disarmament policy.

EU, U.S. Begin Streamlined Trade of Organic Products

05 June 2012

Washington – Organic products certified in the United States or European Union may now be sold as organic in either market, as trade opened up June 1 under a new U.S.-EU equivalency partnership.

"This agreement provides economic opportunities for certified organic farmers as well as additional incentives for prospective farmers," said Miles McEvoy, deputy administrator of the U.S. National Organic Program. "We look forward to working with our European Union counterparts to support organic agriculture."

The United States signed a similar partnership with Canada in July 2009, and additional equivalency-arrangement conversations have begun with South Korea, Taiwan and Japan.

Previously, producers and companies wanting to trade products on both sides of the Atlantic had to obtain separate certifications to two standards, which resulted in a double set of fees, inspections and paperwork, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said in a press release. The new partnership eliminates the double requirement.

During negotiations, the parties conducted on-site audits to ensure their programs' regulations, quality-control measures, certification requirements and labeling practices were compatible.

Although there are slight differences between the United States and European Union organic standards, the negotiators determined that their programs are equivalent, USDA said.

An exception has to do with the use of antibiotics. USDA organic regulations prohibit the use of antibiotics except to control invasive bacterial infections (fire blight) in

organic apple and pear orchards. The EU organic regulations allow antibiotics only to treat infected animals. For products traded under the new partnership, certifying agents must verify that antibiotics are not used for any reason, USDA said.

Later this year, representatives from both markets will compare USDA's organic wine standards to the recently published EU wine standards and determine how wine can fit into the trade partnership. In the interim, traded wine must meet the requirements of the destination market.

More than two-thirds of U.S. consumers buy organic products at least occasionally, and 28 percent buy organic products weekly.

Journalists Check for Lies, Half-Truths, Omissions in Campaigns

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 05 June 2012

Washington — The closer the United States gets to its November elections, the more heated the rhetoric between the candidates becomes, and the temptation to distort or even invent "facts" to disparage an opponent or enhance their own standings increases.

According to fact checkers in the U.S. news media, nearly all candidates appear to have been guilty of at least telling "half-truths" on the U.S. campaign trail, and they have been publicly called to account.

The *Washington Post* blog *The Fact Checker* says its mission is to be a "truth squad" for statements by political figures and government officials "that cry out" for scrutiny, particularly on U.S., international or local issues that the blog considers important.

Candidates or political action committees that plan a speech or political ad that takes an opponent's statements out of context, cites unverified or unrelated data or contradicts earlier statements should take warning.

"We will not be limited to political charges or countercharges. We will seek to explain difficult issues, provide missing context and provide analysis and explanation of various 'code words' used by politicians, diplomats and others to obscure or shade the truth," says the Post's blog.

Dedicating full-time journalists to analyzing and rating candidate and advertising claims in part responds to criticisms of U.S. news media coverage of recent elections, which have often used political advocates to tell audiences what to think and how to interpret campaign statements, rather than offering their own unbiased critiques and analysis.

News coverage of the 2008 U.S. elections prominently featured former politicians, campaign managers and others who had vested interests in the outcome of the contests, in a sense turning the journalist's role of informing the audience over to partisan hacks who made little effort to even appear objective to their audiences.

"If I ever write an autobiography, it'll be titled, *Waiting for People to Lie to Me*," said Glenn Kessler, the editor behind the *Washington Post*'s blog. In a January 11 interview with the C-SPAN television network, the veteran diplomatic and political reporter-turned-fact-checker said it is "in the nature to kind of embellish or exaggerate, or if you want, particularly in politics or on Wall Street ... if you want to spin things your own way."

The politicians might or might not be deliberately lying, he said, but "if a politician says the same thing over and over again, even when it has been pointed out that's untrue ... they know that they're saying something untrue."

Kessler's recent posts include analyzing a chart that compares President Obama's job-creation record with that of likely Republican challenger Mitt Romney, and Romney's claim that Obama's financial stimulus program helped to hire public sector workers, rather than those in the private sector.

For every statement or claim that Kessler checks into, he rates it according to his "Pinocchio Test," in reference to the fictional wooden marionette whose nose grew whenever he told a lie.

The test ranges from One Pinocchio ("Some shading of the facts. Selective telling of the truth. Some omissions and exaggerations, but no outright falsehoods.") to Four Pinocchios ("Whoppers."), with purely truthful statements and claims getting the "Geppetto Checkmark," named after the honest woodcutter who had fashioned the doll in the story.

The Pinocchio Test is not scientific, Kessler told C-SPAN. "It's just a way to kind of track where people stand."

Bill Adair, editor of the *Tampa Bay Times*' PolitiFact and winner of a 2009 Pulitzer Prize, developed and trademarked the "Truth-O-Meter," a similar ratings system, but with more categories, ranging from "True" or "Mostly True" to "Pants on Fire!" for what he classifies as outright lies. Adair also analyzes whether a statement is a "flip," or reversal from a candidate's previously stated position.

"We're doing something that we think is really important journalism," Adair said, and he said his website is "an experiment that grew out of my own guilt as a political

reporter that I had not done enough fact-checking when I covered the 2004 presidential campaign.”

Along with assessing claims and statements on the state and national levels, PolitiFact also tracks how well Obama and members of Congress are fulfilling campaign promises.

The website discredited comedian Jon Stewart’s 2011 claim that Fox News viewers are “the most consistently misinformed,” Republican claims that Obama’s 2010 health care legislation was a U.S. government takeover of the health care industry, and recent Democratic accusations that the Republicans had voted to end Medicare health assistance to the poor.

Speaking with ABC News’ *Top Line* in August 2011, Adair said that when PolitiFact got its start in 2008, it focused mainly on the presidential candidates, but its scope has since expanded to include news media pundits, who currently are “some of the voices that have the biggest bang” in American politics, despite the fact that they are not elected or accountable to voters.

“We actually do more fact-checking of pundits and talk show hosts at PolitiFact than I think any other news organization does,” Adair said, ranging from the left-leaning MSNBC network and its host Rachel Maddow to Fox News and conservative pundit Bill O’Reilly. “We put them to the Truth-O-Meter just like we do everybody else,” he said.

Secretary Clinton Pledges Environmental Action on Scandinavian Visit

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 04 June 2012

Washington — The United States and Sweden are founding members of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, and in Stockholm June 3 they announced further progress in expanding the campaign to reduce short-lived climate pollutants, such as methane, soot and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), used in refrigeration.

The international plan began as an agreement among the United States, Sweden and several other nations and international institutions in February. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said it has been winning converts ever since.

“We’ve been growing, bringing on all G8 countries, as well as Norway, Nigeria, Denmark and Colombia. And we were pleased when the World Bank and the European Commission signed up as well,” Clinton said at a news conference with Sweden’s Climate Ambassador Anna Lindstedt and Minister for the Environment Lena Ek.

“We’ve also increased our funding, thanks in part to contributions from Sweden and Norway. We are setting

up a science advisory panel,” Clinton said.

The coalition aims to make dramatic cuts in this special class of greenhouse gases, an action scientifically shown to have the short-term effect of slowing climate change, Ek said. “By preventing SLCPs emissions, we can significantly reduce near-term climate change and at the same time save 2.5 million lives per year, increase crop yields and food security, and promote gender equality and women’s rights across the globe,” she said.

Lives can be saved by using available, cleaner-burning technologies to reduce soot emissions, which are inhaled by women and children in developing world homes where open cooking fires are used. Technologies also exist to reduce methane emissions from landfills, meat processing plants and breweries at minimal or no cost.

Ek said the coalition will pursue the near-term goal of involving businesses in using those technologies. “To successfully realize that potential, we need the active engagement of businesses, and we need to build partnerships and exchange best practices on a global scale,” she said.

Clinton explained further coalition plans to promote adoption of cleaner technologies. “We will start by holding a technology conference in Bangkok in July to showcase new technologies that can eliminate the need for these potent greenhouse gases in refrigeration and air conditioning. At the upcoming sustainability conference in Rio, we’ll launch an initiative working with cities to reduce methane and other pollutants from their waste systems, and we will be working with oil and gas companies to take advantage of all the currently available zero-cost options.”

The coalition needs best practices, and it needs the best ideas. Clinton said the coalition will sponsor a contest to maximize the input of ideas on raising awareness about short-lived pollutants and how rapidly their reduction can lower greenhouse gas emissions.

“We’re looking for cartoon ideas, slogan ideas, app ideas. Whatever you come up with, we are going to be receptive,” Clinton said.

While the United States works for aggressive action to reduce greenhouse gases at the international level, Clinton said, the Obama administration has taken a number of actions to reduce emissions and increase energy efficiency on the domestic level. In transportation, the administration is phasing in what will be one of the world’s highest standards for energy efficiency of automobiles.

“We’ve made historic investments, more than \$90 billion, in clean energy and are committed to being a world

leader in this vital sector. And since just 2008, we've nearly doubled how much electricity we generate from renewable sources." Clinton said. "And we're making a big push to improve energy efficiency in commercial buildings and home appliances."

Clinton came to this discussion of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change barely 24 hours after she had visited the Arctic, one of the world regions where evidence of a warming planet is most evident. She visited Tromsø, Norway, 350 kilometers north of the Arctic Circle, sometimes called the capital of the Arctic.

She said the scenery was beautiful, but evidence of the warming climate was also apparent. "We toured the waters on a research vessel, listening to marine biologists and sea ice experts and others explain the changes that have come to the Arctic. The waters don't freeze, even in the dead of winter. The ice shelves that have crumbled no longer protect coastlines from erosion. Species are at risk."

The secretary of state said the scenery served as a reminder that humankind has a duty to protect this "fragile, marvelous planet," and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition is devoted to doing just that.

Secretary Panetta Describes U.S. Shift in Asia-Pacific

By Jim Garamone | American Forces Press Service |
04 June 2012

This article was originally posted June 1 to the Department of Defense website.

Singapore – The United States is a Pacific power and will remain engaged in the region, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said during a speech delivered at the 11th Annual Shangri-La Dialogue here.

Panetta explained what America's enduring shift toward the Asia-Pacific means to the region. The speech took place June 2 here. Singapore time is 12 hours ahead of the U.S. East Coast.

The shift has long been forecast. After the fall of the Soviet Union, there were those in the U.S. government who urged a re-focusing of U.S. strategy toward the Pacific. China and India are two of the fastest-growing economies on Earth and the nations of Southeast Asia also grew behind the shield of U.S. presence in the region.

The United States also has deep, lasting alliances with nations in the region including Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand.

This progress and shift, however, were interrupted by the attacks of 9-11 and American attention shifted to combating the terrorist menace.

But now the war in Iraq is over and U.S. troop levels are drawing down in Afghanistan. Last year, President Obama approved a strategy shifting toward Asia. The United States has thousands of miles of Pacific coastline and is an integral part of the region.

"We take on this role not as a distant power, but as part of the Pacific family of nations," Panetta said at the conference. "Our goal is to work closely with all the nations of this region to confront common challenges and promote peace, prosperity and security."

Defense policy in the region calls for the U.S. military to expand military-to-military relationships well beyond the traditional treaty allies.

China is, of course, the major player in the region. China has grown to the second-largest economy in the world and is investing in modernizing its military. Panetta wants good relations with China and will travel there later this year to expand those contacts.

The secretary stressed that the U.S. shift toward the region in no way is aimed at China. "Our effort to renew and intensify our involvement in Asia is fully compatible with the development and growth of China," Panetta said. "Indeed, increased U.S. involvement in this region will benefit China as it advances our shared security and prosperity."

The United States is working with many nations in the region to promote regional security. There are threats in the area. Terrorism, piracy, narco-trafficking, human trafficking are just a few of the problems. There are disputes over territory and the United States would like to see all these problems addressed peacefully by all nations.

Panetta praised the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for its "rules-based" regional security architecture. The secretary also said he looks forward to working with defense ministers from around the region.

Discussions and dialogue can help calm the waters in the South China Sea, where several countries in the region have claims. "The U.S. position is clear and consistent. We call for restraint and diplomatic resolution; we oppose provocation, coercion or the use of force," Panetta said. The United States does not take sides on the disputes, the secretary said, and America has made this position clear to all in the region.

The U.S. military will shift its stance as the global situation shifts, the secretary said. Marine ground and aviation units have begun rotational deployments to Australia. The United States and the Philippines are looking at a similar arrangement.

American littoral combat ships will be berthing in Singapore and the number of Navy assets deployed will shift, too. "By 2020, the Navy will reposture its forces from today's roughly 50/50 split between the Atlantic and Pacific to about a 60/40 split between those oceans – including six aircraft carriers, a majority of our cruisers, destroyers, littoral combat ships and submarines," Panetta said.

The United States will also shift resources to combat new threats of cyberwar and anti-access technologies.

The shift will continue, Panetta said, as leaders from both parties recognize the importance of the region.

"The United States has long been deeply involved in the Asia-Pacific," Panetta said. "Through times of war and peace, under Democratic and Republican leaders, through rancor and comity in Washington, through surplus and debt. We were here then, we are here now and we will be here for the future."

Secretary Clinton Announces \$75 Million U.S. Commitment to Global Health

01 June 2012

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the United States is committing \$75 million to an initiative aimed at improving women's health and reducing maternal mortality around the world.

She spoke about the "Saving Mothers, Giving Life" partnership during remarks to the Global Health Conference in Oslo, and thanked Norwegian leaders for being "one of the most generous nations on earth" and for the country's "extraordinary commitment" to improving global health.

"The stability of any nation is tied up in the well-being of its people," Clinton said from Oslo City Hall June 1. "Every life we save is a step toward that more peaceful, prosperous planet we seek."

She said the United States, Norway and other partners are working to put in place strong health systems for countries around the world.

"We are helping to build clinics and labs, to train staff, improve supply chains, make blood supplies safer, set up record-keeping systems; in short, creating platforms upon which partners can eventually launch their own efforts."

Key in this effort, she said, is donor coordination to support country-led ownership of health systems.

"You can't impose a health system ... from the outside; we understand that," she said. "There has to be encouragement for it to grow from within."

This process, which leads to an end state where a nation's efforts are led, implemented and eventually paid for by its government, communities, civil society and private sector, requires building the country's capacity to set priorities, manage resources, develop plans and carry them out. Clinton said this process is up to "donor and country alike."

She called on donor nations to continue to meet financial commitments during tough economic times and set international benchmarks to compare results of country systems across borders. The secretary also said donors must embrace transparency, root out corruption and improve cooperation and integration of programs.

But Clinton said partner countries have challenges to meet as well, including investing more in the health of their people, identifying the needs that are not being met and convening partners to fill gaps, embracing regulatory changes to allow faster approval of new drugs and identifying corruption at its source.

She stressed the importance of ending gender-based violence and discrimination to create true health equality for all people.

"In some countries, women and girls are considered inherently less valuable than men and boys and are treated that way by custom and law," she said, adding that improving women's health "has dividends for entire societies, from driving down child mortality rates to sparking economic growth."

Clinton said that members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community often also face discrimination and are unable to access necessary health services.

"A system with built-in bias against any part of the population is not only unjust, but is unstable and unsustainable," she said.

A significant step in this effort is the latest initiative to improve women's health, Clinton said. She said millions of women every day throughout the world lack the necessary health care to have healthy childbirths. That's why the United States is partnering with Norway and others to support "innovative interventions that improve outcomes for pregnant women and newborns" around the world, she said.

"Surviving childbirth and growing up healthy should not be a matter of luck or where you live or how much money you have; it should be a fact for every woman everywhere," she said. "And I think we can make this happen and, by doing so, bring the world closer to recognizing that working together, we not only can save

lives, we can help improve them, bringing greater peace [and] prosperity to all.”

Clinton addressed the conference ahead of a meeting with Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere, during which the two discussed enhancing cooperation on a wide range of environmental, military and political issues.

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