

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Obama, Romney Choose Stand-Ins for Debate Practice

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 06 September 2012

Washington — In the run-up to their first presidential debate on October 3, President Obama and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney will be sparring with members of their own political parties in practice sessions, and Ohio Senator Rob Portman and Massachusetts Senator John Kerry have won the roles to impersonate Obama and Romney, respectively, as both candidates seek realistic stand-ins to pose as their rivals.

Debates are crucial to American voters because they provide the best chance to compare the candidates as they respond to tough questions and react to unscripted moments on live television. The pressure on both candidates can be overwhelming because a mistake or a wrongly worded response can instantly obliterate support. For the debate preparations, Portman and Kerry will seek not only to impersonate the presidential candidates, but to portray them at their best.

This will be Portman's second performance as Obama. In 2008, Republican presidential nominee John McCain recruited the Ohio senator for the role, and Portman reportedly listened to audio versions of Obama's books to help mimic his speaking style as part of his preparation.

Portman told Fox News August 27 that he is looking forward to the practice sessions with Romney.

"It's an opportunity to learn more about the other side, too, and what they're thinking, and makes you all the more committed to your point of view," he said.

Portman has portrayed the roles of both Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore and vice-presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman in 2000, and vice presidential candidate John Edwards in 2004.

When playing the role of an opponent, "the key is to be tougher than they are," he told Fox.

Former President Bill Clinton can attest to this after his 1996 debate preparations against Republican challenger Bob Dole. Clinton's campaign chose former Senator George Mitchell as a stand-in for Dole, and Clinton told U.S. public broadcasting in 1996 that Mitchell had been "ruthless."

"The first debate we had in the preparation session he just killed me. You know, I walked in there; he had been preparing for weeks. He'd really done his homework, and I just kind of read the book in a cursory way, and he literally beat my brains out," Clinton said.

Senator Kerry brings unique skills to his portrayal of Romney for Obama's debate preparations. Not only has he gained firsthand experience as a presidential candidate in preparing for the 2004 debates, but he shares Romney's background as a Massachusetts politician.

"There is no one that has more experience or understanding of the presidential debate process than John Kerry," Obama's senior campaign strategist, David Axelrod, told the Boston Globe on June 18. "He's an expert debater who has a fundamental mastery of a wide range of issues, including Mitt Romney's Massachusetts. He's the obvious choice."

For the October 11 vice presidential debate between Ohio Representative Paul Ryan and Vice President Biden, the Democrats have chosen Maryland Representative Chris Van Hollen to portray Ryan.

Van Hollen has had plenty of interaction with Ryan as the ranking minority member on the House Budget Committee, which Ryan chairs, and he told Politico on August 20 that he is comfortable impersonating the Republican vice presidential candidate because he knows "how Paul Ryan presents his case."

He said his job will be to "synthesize" the policy differences between Biden and Ryan during the debate preparations and "focus on the big issues" where the Republican and Democratic visions contrast.

The Republicans have not yet announced who will portray Vice President Biden, but in 2008 they chose vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin's foreign policy adviser, Randy Scheunemann, for the role.

DEBATE MODERATORS ALSO SCRUTINIZED

Along with finding realistic debate stand-ins, presidential campaigns focus on the debate moderators and try to anticipate the questions they will ask. This involves research on the individual journalists and the topics they have covered, and seeking to craft answers that will satisfy them.

For 2012, the Public Broadcasting Service's Jim Lehrer will be moderating the October 3 debate, which will focus on domestic U.S. issues. CNN's Candy Crowley will moderate the October 16 town hall debate, and CBS News' Bob Schieffer will host the October 22 debate, which will focus on foreign policy. Crowley will be the first woman to moderate a presidential debate since 1992.

Ryan and Biden's campaign staffs will turn their attention to ABC News' Martha Raddatz, who will be moderating their October 11 debate.

Both Democratic and Republican staffers will do their best to fully brief the candidates and hone their debating skills in the coming weeks, but there is also the danger of overpreparation, which can result in a poor performance.

President Ronald Reagan blamed the appearance of being tired and "out of it" during his first 1984 debate with Democrat Walter Mondale on having "more facts and figures poured at me for weeks than anyone could possibly sort out and use." Reagan said he had spent much of the debate "wracking my brain so much for facts and figures," according to PBS.org.

Likewise, after meeting with former President George H. W. Bush for debate preparations in 1996, Republican candidate Bob Dole told CNN he was done with his prepping.

"It's like filling up your tank with gas — it only holds so much," Dole said. "I'm ready."

The former president agreed. "You get cluttered up with preparations," Bush said.

Afghan Forces Lead Security for 75 Percent of the Population

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer |
06 September 2012

Washington — Afghan national forces are taking the lead in providing security in districts that cover 75 percent of the population in Afghanistan, Lieutenant General James Terry says.

Taliban insurgents are still threatening and have been deadly at times, and they are trying to stay relevant, but their position is "continually eroding," Terry said in a wide-reaching press briefing at the Pentagon September 5.

"The insurgency is facing a progressively more capable Afghan national security force, which is bearing every day an increasingly larger burden as it moves into the lead for security here in Afghanistan," Terry said.

Terry, who is the commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command and deputy commanding general of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, briefed journalists in Washington via teleconference from his headquarters in Kabul. He is also the commanding general of the U.S. Army V Corps.

The Taliban insurgency campaign of intimidation and assassination is working against them, and their leadership is under constant pressure, and their resources are strained, Terry added. The majority of Afghans are war weary and, "more importantly, they're tired of the heavy-handed approach of the insurgency, an insurgency

that attempts to control the people of Afghanistan by limiting their education, controlling their freedom of movement and intimidating them," he said.

Terry said the combined team of allied forces and Afghan security forces is moving forward into the next 28 months in a steady transition of the Afghan military taking the lead by the end of 2014, which was established at the 2010 Lisbon NATO Summit.

"The surge [of U.S. and allied forces] has served to break the momentum of insurgency and has provided the time and space for our Afghan partners to develop," Terry told journalists. "Our aim is to establish a more stable Afghanistan secured by Afghan national security forces, which then affords an opportunity to develop the institutions of government."

Terry said that allied forces working with the Afghan leadership and the military and police are setting the conditions for Afghanistan to contribute to regional stability and the achievement of preventing the country from ever being used again by extremists as a safe haven.

"The recent progress in the ANSF [Afghan National Security Forces] is enabling a shift from a coalition-led counterinsurgency approach to an ANSF-led counterinsurgency operation supported by ISAF," he said.

The progress is being made by employing an array of ISAF activities to develop the full effectiveness of the Afghan National Security Forces that includes partnering, advising and enabling. Each allied advisory team has been intentionally designed to advise, assist and build capability within the army and the police, he added.

Terry said that the Taliban insurgents have been attempting to divide the coalition from its Afghan partners out of a fear of the increasingly stronger Afghan national security force. "The insurgency is continuously degraded and discredited," he said.

Terry added that the recent insider attacks by some Afghan personnel against coalition personnel are a threat recognized by the Afghan leadership, the police and the army, as well as the ISAF leadership. "We are committed to stopping it," he said.

"Indeed, Afghans must find their own solutions as they take the lead," Terry said. And one major step has been a stronger emphasis on background checks on those seeking to join the national army and police, he said.

International Group Makes New Discoveries on Human Genome

06 September 2012

Washington — After nine years of collaboration, 440 researchers in 32 labs around the world are pushing scientific understanding of the human genome to a new level. Findings were announced by the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) September 5 as the team published its extensive findings in 29 different papers appearing in three scientific journals.

The new findings — known as the Encyclopedia of DNA Elements (ENCODE) — build on the 2003 announcement when the Human Genome Project identified all the 20,000–25,000 genes of human DNA and determined the sequences of the 3 billion chemical base pairs that make up human DNA. That scientific project consumed a multinational team for 13 years, and was considered a scientific achievement on the magnitude of an Apollo mission to the moon of the late 1960s and 1970s.

“During the early debates about the Human Genome Project, researchers had predicted that only a few percent of the human genome sequence encoded proteins, the workhorses of the cell, and that the rest was junk. We now know that this conclusion was wrong,” said Dr. Eric Green, director of the NHGRI. “ENCODE has revealed that most of the human genome is involved in the complex molecular choreography required for converting genetic information into living cells and organisms.”

ENCODE’s goal was to identify all the genome’s functional elements, even though the methods and strategies to achieve the goal were not fully evolved when the work began. The technology for analysis of DNA sequencing advanced as the project unfolded, increasing the boundaries of the undertaking as it went along, in a scale that is described as “remarkable,” in a NHGRI news release.

“We’ve come a long way,” said Ewan Birney of the European Bioinformatics Institute in the United Kingdom and a coordinator of analysis for ENCODE. “By carefully piecing together a simply staggering variety of data, we’ve shown that the human genome is simply alive with switches, turning our genes on and off and controlling when and where proteins are produced. ENCODE has taken our knowledge of the genome to the next level.”

Hundreds of researchers across the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, Singapore and Japan conducted more than 1,600 sets of experiments on 147 types of tissue. They linked more than 80 percent of the human genome sequence to a specific biological function, and mapped more than 4 million regulatory regions where proteins interact with DNA to determine cellular development for

specific functions of the body. ENCODE generated more than 15 trillion bytes of raw data and ate up more than 300 years of computer time throughout the analysis.

NHGRI program director Elise Feingold likens the ENCODE data to Google’s map feature, which allows users to magnify a particular area of interest and access a variety of different data on that area, including maps, states, streets and photos.

“The ENCODE maps allow researchers to inspect the chromosomes, genes, functional elements and individual nucleotides in the human genome in much the same way,” Feingold said.

The ENCODE consortium has made the data available on the Internet to other researchers, and the material is “rapidly becoming a fundamental resource for researchers to help understand human biology and disease,” according to the NHGRI press release. Investigators who were not part of ENCODE are already using the data in disease research, resulting in publication of more than 100 scientific papers that have drawn on the data, NHGRI said.

The 2003 findings mapping the genome were also made available to the global scientific community at the time, and the research that followed is considered the advent of the multibillion dollar U.S. biotechnology industry.

NHGRI will continue ENCODE research for at least another four years to better describe the functional genomic elements in all the different types of cells in the body.

NHGRI is one of the 27 institutes and centers that make up the National Institutes of Health, the United States frontline medical research agency, investigating the causes, treatments and cures for disease.

Virginia Synagogue Welcomes Muslim Group

By Mark Trainer | Staff Writer | 06 September 2012

Washington — Three years ago, the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) in Northern Virginia had a problem. They needed a space to hold their Friday prayers. “We were looking around for place that could accommodate worshippers,” Rizwan Jaka, a board member of the society told the BBC, “that could be a nice wholesome, family-oriented place.”

The location they found — the synagogue of the Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation — has for three years provided a welcoming atmosphere for the Muslim Society’s members and their prayers. “There’s something beautiful about coming together at a synagogue and continuing that relationship between the Muslim and

Jewish communities, “Jaka said, “and furthering the dialogue, furthering the love and friendship we that we have.”

“This is a community that believes in the fellowship of all people of faith,” said Rabbi Michael Holzman. “Many of them remember the days when other faiths supported us. In fact, every year our high holidays, which happen in September – Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – we don’t have enough space in our building for all our members , and so we go to a Catholic church.”

In addition to the Friday prayers, Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation has hosted Ramadan prayers and evening meals as well as Eid celebrations. Last year, ADAMS invited Rabbi Holzman to address the Friday prayer groups, and the ADAMS imam was invited to teach at the regular Shabbat morning Torah study. On another evening, both imam and rabbi spoke at the ADAMS center on the topic of Halakhah (Jewish law) and Sharia (Islamic law) as it related to U.S. constitutional law.

“We’re all Americans,” Jaka said, “and we share the same hospitals, we share the same school. Our families get to know one another in the society.”

Secretary Clinton Says U.S.-China Dialogue Gaining Strength, Resilience

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 05 September 2012

Washington – Through their expanding and ongoing dialogue, the United States and China are building habits of cooperation, communication and consultation on “every consequential issue facing our nations and the world today,” in areas of mutual interest as well as those of disagreement, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said.

“Our two nations are trying to do something that has never been done in history, which is to write a new answer to the question of what happens when an established power and a rising power meet,” Clinton said in a September 5 press conference in Beijing with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi.

The United States welcomes “the rise of a strong, prosperous and peaceful China” and wants China’s economic success to continue providing opportunities for the Chinese people, and in turn have a positive impact on the global economy. China’s greater role in world affairs will also strengthen global stability and help to solve urgent challenges, she said.

“We are convinced that our two countries gain far more when we cooperate with one another than when we descend into an unhealthy competition. So we are committed to managing our differences effectively and

expanding our cooperation wherever and whenever possible,” Clinton said.

The U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, the U.S.-China Asia-Pacific Consultations, numerous face-to-face meetings between Chinese President Hu Jintao and President Obama, and other mechanisms have allowed officials on both sides to work hard on their bilateral engagement during the Obama administration. “I’m very proud of the strength and resilience that we have built into our relationship. It makes it possible for us to talk about anything and to find ways to tackle issues frankly and forthrightly,” the secretary said.

“This is a relationship that matters to both of us, and I am very convinced that we’ve established a strong foundation, government to government and people to people,” she said.

As with all other bilateral relationships, China and the United States “will never agree on all matters,” including human rights and how to respond to Syria’s violent political unrest. But, Clinton said, “we are learning how to manage our differences, deal openly with misunderstandings when they do occur, and remain in communication as transparently and clearly as possible.”

Presidents Hu and Obama have set out a vision to build a “positive, cooperative and comprehensive” relationship that “delivers benefits to both our nations” – a vision that officials on both sides have “taken to heart,” she said. “That, in turn, helps to drive peace, stability, progress and prosperity throughout the region and the world.”

Foreign Minister Yang said China and the United States cannot agree on everything because they “differ from each other in our histories, our cultures, ideologies, social systems and actual national conditions.” But he said having mutual respect for each other’s core interests and concerns is important for the continued development of the relationship.

“If we can stay focused on that, then we can overcome various disputes or frictions and their distraction to the relationship and maintain the dialogue and cooperation, which is the primary facet of our relationship and to make sure this relationship will continue to be mutually beneficial going forward,” Yang said.

“History and facts [have] repeatedly proven that China and the United States have interwoven interests, and cooperation will benefit both sides where confrontation will hurt both sides,” he said.

The foreign minister noted that 2012 marks the 40th anniversary of President Nixon’s 1972 visit to China and the Shanghai Communiqué that established the

framework for both countries to develop relations for the first time since 1949.

“In these 40 years, the China-U.S. relationship has gone through a lot, but, generally speaking, it has been continuously moving forward, bringing tangible benefits to the people of our two countries and contributing to peace, stability and development in the world,” Yang said.

Today, the leaders of both countries are working together to advance a cooperative partnership “based on mutual respect and mutual benefit and on working together to explore the construction of a new type of major country relationship,” which Yang said will develop relations even further.

U.S. Now Providing \$100 Million in Humanitarian Aid for Syrians

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 05 September 2012

Washington – The United States is providing an additional \$21 million to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) to support the estimated 2.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria as well as the more than 240,000 people who have fled to neighboring countries to escape Syria’s ongoing conflict.

“With this new assistance, the United States is providing a total of more than \$100 million for humanitarian activities both inside Syria and in neighboring countries,” a State Department news release said September 5.

The statement followed the announcement of additional aid earlier in the day by U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Rajiv Shah, who explained the new funding will be split between food assistance for conflict-affected people inside Syria (\$14.3 million) and support for Syrians who have sought refuge in neighboring Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq (\$6.7 million).

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said its recent estimate that 2.5 million people in Syria are in need of humanitarian aid is more than double the number assessed in March 2012, adding that more than 1.2 million people have been internally displaced.

Syria has been embroiled in violent conflict since March 2011, when Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad launched brutal crackdowns on political opponents that have now left more than 14,000 people dead. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in August that the violence was continuing to increase, leading more and more Syrians to cross borders each day seeking safety.

The State Department now reports that in August alone, more than 100,000 Syrian refugees flooded into neighboring countries, stretching host country capacity. The department’s statement commended Syria’s neighbors for their generosity in taking on the significant financial burden of providing shelter, medical care, food and water to thousands of refugees.

U.S. assistance is providing critical medical supplies, emergency health care, food and relief supplies such as blankets, hygiene kits and kitchen sets to help those who have remained in Syria as well as those who have fled to neighboring countries.

Secretary Clinton Praises Southeast Asian Initiative for Dispute Resolution

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 04 September 2012

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton praised Indonesia’s efforts to advance unity among the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and she urged member countries to agree on a comprehensive code of conduct to peacefully address disagreements, including territorial claims in the South China Sea between China and four other ASEAN states.

Speaking with Indonesian Foreign Minister Raden Mohammad Marty Muliana Natalegawa September 3 in Jakarta, Indonesia, Clinton said the United States “does not take a position on competing territorial claim[s] over land features,” but wants to see the countries of the region “work collaboratively together to resolve disputes without coercion, without intimidation, without threats and certainly without the use of force.”

Clinton was in Indonesia as part of an 11-day, six-nation trip to the Asia-Pacific region. She is also scheduled to visit China September 4-5; Dili, Timor-Leste, on September 6; Brunei Darussalam, September 6-7; and Vladivostok September 8-9, representing the United States at the annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, which is being hosted by Russia.

She said the Obama administration is encouraging ASEAN and China to agree upon a comprehensive code of conduct that will “establish rules of the road and clear procedures for peacefully addressing disagreements” and can serve as a mechanism to resolve future conflicts.

“Remember, there are many claimants. It’s not just ASEAN members claiming vis-a-vis China. There are claims within ASEAN members themselves,” Clinton said.

Natalegawa said ASEAN’s “cohesion and unity” are essential if there is to be diplomatic progress in the South China Sea disputes.

"I think the track is quite clear what's ahead of us; namely, we must apply ourselves to have the code of conduct done. Absent a code of conduct, absent a diplomatic process, we can be certain of more incidents and more tension for our region," he said.

To reduce tensions in the region, "it is not only right that ASEAN must be united, but it is also the smart thing to do," Natalegawa said.

NEW U.S. FUNDS FOR INDONESIAN STUDENTS

The secretary said the United States is seeking to promote Indonesia's economic growth through trade and development and she welcomed the Indonesian government's announcement of more than half a trillion dollars in planned infrastructure development projects, saying the country's growth is "essential not only for Indonesia but regionally and globally."

She also announced that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is investing \$83 million over the next five years to support Indonesia's primary school-level education, and is creating a \$20 million fund for graduate-level education for Indonesian students in the United States.

"Education remains the cornerstone of economic growth and individual advancement," Clinton said, and "these kinds of educational exchanges reflect the model of partnership that the United States is pursuing based on shared values, delivering concrete benefits for our people and enhancing our partnership."

According to a September 3 State Department fact sheet, the primary education funds expand USAID's basic education program to include teacher training and development of strategies for reading programs for early grades.

The fact sheet said the past two years have seen a 25 percent increase in the number of U.S. visas issued to Indonesian students. There is also a four-year, \$165 million U.S.-Indonesia Higher Education Partnership that includes expanded academic exchanges, including the new Fulbright Indonesia Research, Science and Technology (FIRST) program, the Community College Initiative for Indonesian students and faculty, English language programs for Indonesians, and other educational partnerships.

STRENGTHENED U.S.-ASEAN TIES

While in Jakarta, Clinton also met with ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan September 4 and said the Obama administration has worked over the past three years to deepen, broaden and elevate the relationship between

ASEAN and the United States.

"I believe our relationship is stronger and more effective. And that is all to the good, because the United States views ASEAN as central to regional stability and economic progress in the Asia-Pacific," she said.

Along with signing ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and opening a mission to ASEAN, President Obama and other senior U.S. leaders have repeatedly engaged with their ASEAN counterparts. The United States has also devoted resources to support ASEAN's goal of economic and political integration, as well as to narrow the development gap among ASEAN nations, and to promote and protect human rights, Clinton said.

"We are making a sustained, all-out effort to build an enduring, multifaceted relationship between ASEAN and the United States. We want to do all we can to advance ASEAN's goal of integration, because we have an interest in strengthening ASEAN's ability to address regional challenges in an effective, comprehensive way," she said.

USTR Kirk Visits Vietnam, Cambodia to Strengthen U.S.-Asia Trade

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 04 September 2012

Washington – U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Ron Kirk concluded meetings with Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang, Deputy Prime Minister Vu Van Ninh and other senior officials in Hanoi that covered the U.S.-Vietnam economic relationship as well as regional trade and investment ties.

"The bilateral relationship between the United States and Vietnam has grown rapidly into a robust and mutually beneficial one," Kirk said in a September 3 statement.

The representative said his meetings with top Vietnamese officials offered "an opportunity to further this relationship significantly."

Kirk's visit included talks with Vietnam's Minister of Industry and Trade Va Huy Hoang and Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Cao Duc Phat.

In addition to enhancing bilateral ties, U.S. and Vietnamese leaders discussed their continued support for concluding the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a regional trade agreement currently under negotiation by the United States, Vietnam and seven other Asia-Pacific nations.

"Now is the time to make the decisions necessary to bring the TPP to fruition as a high-standard, 21st-century agreement that will benefit all partners," Kirk said. "I am pleased that Vietnam shares our eagerness to make progress at this month's round of talks."

The 14th round of Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations will take place September 6–15 in Leesburg, Virginia.

Kirk's talks with Vietnam's leaders also covered objectives in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Week, held September 2–9 in Vladivostok, Russia. His office said the United States is committed to achieving several key steps during the meeting, including an agreed list of environmental goods and services targeted for tariff cuts in the region.

Ahead of his trip to Vietnam, Kirk visited Cambodia. There, he reiterated President Obama's intention to deepen and strengthen trade and investment ties between the United States and Southeast Asia. His comments followed the close of economic ministerial meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the first-ever U.S.-ASEAN Business Summit.

"The United States' commitment to the ASEAN region is long-term," Kirk said in an August 31 statement. "The ASEAN countries together are already a major trading partner for the United States, but we — and the American business community — see enormous potential to grow our mutual trade and investment as ASEAN pursues its own objectives of liberalizing trade in the region, harnessing the digital economy and reducing economic disparities among its members."

While in Siem Reap, Kirk met with Cambodian Minister of Commerce Cham Prasidh to begin exploratory discussions on a potential bilateral investment treaty (BIT).

"A bilateral investment treaty between the United States and Cambodia would encourage investment by improving investment climates, promoting market-based economic reforms and strengthening rule of law," Kirk said. "Our decision to explore this possibility highlights progress made by Cambodia in fostering a policy environment that treats private investment in an open, transparent and nondiscriminatory way."

The BIT would provide binding legal rules regarding each country's treatment of investors from the other country, providing new improvements and protections for investors.

The United States currently has more than 40 BITs in force with countries around the world.

Secretary Clinton Pledges Security, Economic Growth at Pacific Forum

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer |
01 September 2012

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

pledged a renewed U.S. commitment to the Pacific region and to long-standing partnerships with the people of Pacific island nations during her first visit to Rarotonga, Cook Islands, on August 31.

Clinton also announced a new contribution of more than \$32 million for programs throughout the region that are targeted at expanding economic development while also protecting biodiversity. The United States spends approximately \$330 million a year on development across the Asia-Pacific region.

The secretary attended the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Post-Forum Dialogue meeting along with foreign ministers and leaders from across the Pacific on the first stop of an 11-day, six nation trip to the region. She will next travel to Jakarta, the seat of the secretariat of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, for meetings with Indonesian leaders at the U.S.-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership.

Clinton is also scheduled to visit China on September 4–5; Dili, Timor-Leste, on September 6; Brunei Darussalam, September 6–7; and conclude her trip in Vladivostok representing the United States at the annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum September 8–9, which is being hosted by Russia. Clinton is expected to hold meetings with foreign ministers and world leaders on the sidelines of the regional forums.

"When we talk about our engagement in the Asia Pacific, we really are looking at a model of partnerships that reflect our shared values, delivers practical benefits, and helps create stronger economies and societies," Clinton said in August 31 remarks at the Tamarind House in Rarotonga.

"Our goal is to help the island nations of the Pacific realize their own aspirations, reach your own goals. And therefore, we are working on everything from expanding economic opportunity to protecting the environment to fighting gender-based violence, and we particularly honor the sacrifice that many Pacific partners are making to bring peace and security to war-torn areas around the globe, including places like Afghanistan and Sudan."

"We share a common interest in advancing peace, security, and prosperity in this vital region," she added.

Clinton is the first secretary of state to attend the Pacific Islands Forum, and the first to visit the Cook Islands. The Pacific Islands Forum is a group of 16 independent, self-governing states: Australia; the Cook Islands; the Federated States of Micronesia; Fiji; Kiribati; Nauru; New Zealand; Niue; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Republic of Marshall Islands; Samoa; Solomon Islands; Tonga; Tuvalu; and Vanuatu. The forum was founded in 1971 as

the South Pacific Forum, but in 2000 the name was changed to its present form.

Since 1989, the United States and 13 other dialogue partners have met in a Post-Forum Dialogue at the foreign minister level.

Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs Richard Marles, New Zealand Foreign Minister Murray McCully, and Clinton also met on August 31 to discuss their long-standing partnerships with the Pacific island nations. The three foreign ministers said in a joint press statement released September 1 that they would work to promote economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security in the region.

In the statement, the three nations expressed interest in advancing regional development in the Pacific, and noted significant concern about the impact of climate change, which they said represents an urgent environmental, economic, development and security issue. The foreign ministers also cited the importance of dependable access to clean and affordable energy, which is essential to support sustainable economic development among the Pacific island nations. New Zealand hosts the 2013 Pacific Energy Conference, which will address these and other pressing energy concerns.

Australia, New Zealand and the United States also expressed the need to protect the region's diverse fisheries. "They reiterated their support for successful negotiations to extend the South Pacific Tuna Treaty on terms that ensure long-term economic benefits to the Pacific region and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the region's fish stocks," the joint statement said.

And the ministers cited the importance of maritime surveillance cooperation and coordination, and the need to enhance the capacity of Pacific island nations. Clinton also told leaders at the dialogue meeting that the United States would not abandon its role in helping to protect maritime commerce in the region.

"Australia and New Zealand also welcomed the announcement by the United States of new efforts to fund training, assessment and clean-up of unexploded ordnance, a legacy of World War II, in several Pacific Island countries," the statement said.

And Marles, McCully and Clinton also stressed the importance in their talks of prompting gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Pacific. They praised and endorsed the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration issued by the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum, as well as the Joint Statement on the Rarotonga Dialogue on Gender Equality that was issued

by the dialogue members.

NASA Missions to Jupiter and Ceres Advance Planetary Science

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 31 August 2012

Washington — Two NASA science missions — one to Jupiter, the giant of the solar system, and the second to the dwarf planet Ceres — are passing important benchmarks as August turns to September.

The Juno spacecraft bound for Jupiter successfully performed its first deep-space maneuver since its launch in August 2011 with a half-hour engine burn that changed the spacecraft's velocity, putting it on track for an upcoming Earth flyby.

The Dawn spacecraft is preparing to leave the asteroid Vesta to begin a more than two-year journey to Ceres, also in the asteroid belt. Dawn began what will become a journey of almost 5 billion kilometers in 2007 to visit the two largest bodies in the solar system's asteroid belt.

Dawn's journey to the two bodies — which NASA calls cosmic fossils — is gathering data for a better understanding of asteroids. That body of knowledge may eventually inform a mission taking a crew of astronauts to the asteroids.

"We went to Vesta to fill in the blanks of our knowledge about the early history of our solar system," said Christopher Russell, Dawn's principal investigator, based at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), an institution partnered with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory for this mission. "Dawn has filled in those pages and more, revealing to us how special Vesta is as a survivor from the earliest days of the solar system."

Dawn photographed Vesta from a close vantage point, revealing that the asteroid had completely melted in its past, and is now a layered body with an iron core, and bears the scars of collisions with other bodies.

"We now can say with certainty that Vesta resembles a small planet more closely than a typical asteroid," said Russell.

Dawn begins the journey to Ceres on September 5, and in doing so, it will be the first probe to orbit and study two destinations.

UCLA is responsible for the science activities of the Dawn mission. The German Aerospace Center, the Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research, the Italian Space Agency and the Italian National Astrophysical Institute are part of the mission team.

JUNO TO JUPITER

Juno was more than 480 million kilometers from Earth August 30, when JPL navigators and mission controllers watched their computer screens to see the craft fire its main engine for an accurate burn. The craft will perform a second burn on September 4 to set a course for an Earth flyby, which will boost the craft's velocity to almost 7.5 kilometers per second, sending it on the proper flight path to reach Jupiter, the giant gas planet that dominates its corner of the solar system. But the destination still has four years and 2.2 billion kilometers to go, said Scott Bolton, Juno's principal investigator from the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio.

"We need to go to Jupiter to learn our history because Jupiter is the largest of the planets, and it formed by grabbing most of the material left over from the sun's formation," said Bolton. "If we want to learn about the history of the elements that made Earth and life, we need to first understand what happened when Jupiter formed."

The Southwest Research Institute is JPL's partner in the Juno mission.

When the spacecraft reaches Jupiter, it will circle the planet 33 times from pole to pole and use the scientific instruments on board to probe beneath the cloud cover that obscures the planet. The craft will be gathering data that will help researchers better understand Jupiter's structure, atmosphere and magnetosphere.

Both the Dawn and Juno missions are part of NASA's planetary science program, which also encompasses the Curiosity rover's mission on Mars. The program has spacecraft exploring the innermost planet of the solar system to the very edge of the sun's influence.

The NASA website outlines the goals of the program: "With an exploration strategy based on progressing from flybys, to orbiting, to landing, to roving and finally to returning samples from planetary bodies, NASA advances the scientific understanding of the solar system in extraordinary ways, while pushing the limits of spacecraft and robotic engineering design and operations."

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