

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Secretary Kerry to Meet with Israeli, Palestinian Leaders

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer |
04 April 2013

Washington — Secretary of State John Kerry will meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas April 8-9 in Jerusalem and Ramallah.

Following President Obama's recent visit to the region, Obama asked the secretary to continue exploring with the Israelis and the Palestinians how the United States can support their efforts at getting back to negotiations "and in having a real dialogue leading to peace," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told journalists April 3 in Washington.

Obama visited Jerusalem, Ramallah and Amman, Jordan, March 20-23 and was accompanied by Kerry during those visits. The president met with Netanyahu and Abbas during his trip and delivered a major address while in Jerusalem to college students on the importance of U.S. relations in the region and a desire for a meaningful peace.

"As you know, the secretary had a chance to have a meeting directly after the visit with both Prime Minister Netanyahu and with President Abbas," Nuland told journalists. "It's now been a couple of weeks. They've had some time to reflect on the visit."

Nuland said this is a chance for Kerry to return and listen again and to hear what the two leaders think may be possible going forward. Kerry believes strongly in personal diplomacy and seeks to meet with international leaders and listen directly to their concerns.

Kerry will "also be making clear that the parties themselves have to want to get back to the [negotiating] table, that this is a choice that they have to make, and that they've also got to recognize — both parties — that compromises and sacrifices are going to have to be made if we're going to be able to help," Nuland said during the department's daily press briefing.

Nuland added that Kerry has been passionate during his entire career in public service about the active role of the United States in supporting Middle East peace.

"The president, with his trip, committed very strongly that if the parties are ready to move, we are ready to help them, and that he wants Secretary Kerry to explore what's possible," Nuland said.

Nuland emphasized that the president and the secretary

want to see what's possible for future peace negotiations, but that this trip should not be interpreted as a renewal of the "shuttle diplomacy" that was conducted in the 1970s by then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and subsequent secretaries.

"It reflects the commitment of the president, the commitment of the secretary, to see what's possible," she added.

Nuland said the president said during his visit that both sides are going to have to create an environment for peace, but that restarting the process would have to be without preconditions.

"The secretary is committed to using his strong relationships with both leaders to encourage them to be open, to be creative, to be prepared for compromises, and to work hard to build trust between them, to increase confidence, and to create that environment where we're able to help them," Nuland said.

Nuland told journalists that Kerry begins his trip April 6 with a stop in Istanbul, where he will consult with Turkish leaders on a variety of subjects, including the ongoing civil strife in Syria. He will then visit Jerusalem and Ramallah April 8-9.

Kerry then travels to London April 10-11 for the Group of Eight (G8) Foreign Ministers meeting and a series of bilateral meetings with some of the ministers on the sidelines.

"And then April 12th through April 15th, he will go on to Northeast Asia, starting in Seoul on April 12th, in Beijing on April 13th, and in Tokyo on April 14th," she said, before Kerry returns to Washington on April 15.

Trade Official Identifies Export Problems for U.S. Telecom Firms

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 04 April 2013

Washington — The top U.S. official in charge of monitoring and enforcing trade agreements says Brazil, India, and Indonesia "may" be hampering U.S. telecommunications manufacturers from competing on a level playing field in their markets.

"Recent years have witnessed a growing trend among our trading partners to impose localization barriers to trade designed to protect, favor or stimulate domestic industries," acting U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Demetrios Marantis said in a report released April 3. "U.S. equipment manufacturers may be disadvantaged by the growing use of local content requirements in countries such as Brazil, India and Indonesia," he added.

The report, called the 1377 Review, is issued annually to highlight barriers to exports of U.S. telecommunications services and equipment.

The USTR report noted Pakistan's practice of charging U.S. phone carriers extra to complete long-distance phone calls in Pakistan, "resulting in higher costs for U.S. carriers and higher prices for U.S. consumers." The report named El Salvador, Ghana and Jamaica in the same connection.

The report said that during the past year, since the 1377 Review of 2012, the USTR office has achieved progress with Canada, Mexico and Israel in resolving telecommunications issues. Canada passed laws that allow foreign investments by telecommunications companies of up to 100 percent, and the new Mexican administration has introduced legislation removing foreign investment limits in the sector, the report said. With regard to Israel, the report said, an agreement was signed that will permit U.S. laboratories to test telecommunications products for conformity with Israeli technical requirements and vice versa.

"We know that these annual reviews and the follow-up work we do on the identified issues produce results," Marantis said.

World Health Day: Know Your Blood Pressure

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 04 April 2013

Washington — High blood pressure is a major factor leading to heart attacks and strokes for people everywhere. Health care providers are emphasizing the importance of controlling this risky condition in recognition of World Health Day, April 7.

The event is marked on this same date each year, the anniversary of the Geneva-based World Health Organization (WHO). Created in 1948, WHO now counts 194 nations as members.

WHO estimates that high blood pressure — also known as hypertension — is a factor in close to 9.4 million deaths each year.

"Your blood pressure naturally rises and falls a bit during the day," said Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in a blog post recognizing World Health Day, "but permanent high blood pressure is a dangerous condition that increases your chance of heart disease, heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, and even blindness."

Knowing your blood pressure level and keeping it at a healthy rate is the WHO message for World Health Day. This is of particular importance in the developing world

where the risk is highest. In Africa, 46 percent of adults have high blood pressure, WHO reports, the highest rate among world regions. The Americas have the lowest prevalence, with 35 percent of the population having hypertension readings at a dangerous level.

How to keep your blood pressure under control is no mystery. The basic guidelines for a healthy lifestyle apply: less salt in a balanced diet, with regular physical activity. Stay off the tobacco, and go easy on the alcohol.

The payoff for following those guidelines can be huge for both the individual and society at large.

"Early detection of high blood pressure and lowering heart attack and stroke risk is clearly far less expensive for individuals and governments than heart surgery, stroke care, dialysis, and other interventions that may be needed later if high blood pressure is left unchecked and uncontrolled," says Dr. Shanthi Mendis, acting director of the WHO Department for Management of Noncommunicable Diseases.

In the United States, high blood pressure is estimated to affect one in three adults. It is known as "the silent killer" because it frequently presents no warning signs or symptoms.

Blood pressure awareness is a key factor in the U.S. campaign Million Hearts. This drive aims to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes over five years by raising awareness of the risk factors and promoting healthy lifestyles. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, state and local agencies, community organizations and private partners are all contributing to Million Hearts to minimize the risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

In the ongoing search for better understanding of cardiovascular disease and its causes, NIH has a large clinical trial underway to determine if the current perception of a "normal" blood pressure reading should be revised. The systolic blood pressure is the measurement of the blood leaving the heart, the upper number in a blood pressure reading. NIH is running the Systolic Blood Pressure Intervention Trial (SPRINT) to test whether intensive lowering of systolic blood pressure, lower than the current recommended level of 120 or below, will further reduce risk of heart disease and stroke.

Representatives of the NIH's Heart, Lung and Blood Institute will be participating in a Google+ Hangout April 5 about hypertension in honor of World Health Day.

Secretary Kerry on More Work to Bring War Criminals to Justice

03 April 2013

Secretary of State John Kerry announces the expansion of the State Department's War Crimes Rewards Program. Prior to becoming secretary of state, Kerry served as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As chairman, the last piece of legislation Kerry authored and guided through to enactment dealt with war criminals

This op-ed by Secretary Kerry on rewards for leaders of the Lord's Resistance Army originally appeared in the Huffington Post on April 3. There are no republication restrictions for use by U.S. embassies.

More Work to Bring War Criminals to Justice

By Secretary of State John Kerry

Imagine for a moment that you are a child growing up in central Africa. Instead of sleeping at home with your family each night, you take shelter with dozens of other children. You hope you'll find safety in numbers. You pray that you will not be pulled out of your bed and abducted in the night by an armed militia -- conscripted into a life of violence, forced to brutalize your own family members, used as a sex slave, condemned to a life on the run from the authorities.

It's a living nightmare -- but thanks in part to last year's Kony video about the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), it's a reality that millions of Americans now know that for almost twenty years has tormented and terrorized children across Uganda, the DRC, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan.

It has to stop.

Last April at this exact time, I came to the Huffington Post and I talked directly with you about some common sense steps we could take to help end the horror of thugs like Kony. I was chairing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and introducing new legislation which I asked you to help pass into law. You responded -- we mobilized the grassroots -- Congress moved quickly -- and the very last piece of legislation I passed as a Senator was the bill we'd talked about right here. As I was awaiting confirmation to become Secretary of State, the bill came to President Obama's desk and he signed it into law.

So the last piece of legislation I passed as a Senator is one of the first I'm now ready to deploy on an issue we care about deeply. Today I return to Huffington Post to announce the new steps the State Department is taking in order to tighten the screws on murderers like Kony -- and you should know you helped to make it happen.

Today, I am announcing a new weapon in our fight. Through the expansion of the War Crimes Rewards Program, the Department of State is offering up to \$5 million for information that leads to the arrest, transfer, and conviction of the top three leaders of the LRA: Joseph Kony, Okot Odhiambo, and Dominic Ongwen. All three are charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Kony and his cronies have eluded capture for years. The LRA is broken down into small bands of rebels, scattered throughout dense jungle, hidden by dense canopy, controlling territory through tactics of fear and intimidation. We know they will not be easy to find.

But we know that rewards have a proven track record of generating tips that help authorities find fugitives and hold them accountable -- just look at the example of criminals and butchers from conflicts in Sierra Leone, the former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda, all brought to justice in part through the use of rewards.

Of course, Joseph Kony and the LRA are not the only fugitive criminals we are targeting in Africa. So today I'm also announcing a \$5 million reward for Sylvestre Mudacumura, who has committed and ordered brutal attacks on civilians as the military commander the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Several individuals accused of carrying out the 1994 Rwandan genocide belong to the FDLR.

Nineteen years after nearly one million Rwandans were killed in the 1994 genocide, nine of the men wanted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for allegedly planning, organizing, and carrying out the genocide remain free. Today, I also want to remind people around the world that the United States government still offers rewards of up to \$5 million leading to the arrest of these fugitives. Their names are Felicien Kabuga, Protais Mpiranya, Augustin Bizimana, Fulgence Kayishema, Pheneas Munyarugarama, Aloys Ndimbati, Ladislav Ntaganzwa, Charles Ryandikayo, and Charles Sikubwabo.

I know coming forward takes guts, particularly when we are asking for information about notorious criminals like Kony. Let me assure you that the security of our informants is a priority of the War Crimes Rewards Program. The United States does not announce the names of informants even when a reward payment has been made -- and we always make good on our payments. In the past three years alone, we have made 14 reward payments to individuals who have provided critical information.

Anyone with information can help bring these criminals to justice. Simply contact the U.S. government through

any of our embassies or through our secure website (www.state.gov/warcrimesrewards). Stephen Rapp, our Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues and his staff in the office of Global Criminal Justice are ready to receive and respond to tips.

To be clear, this is not a dead-or-alive bounty program. Information must lead to the secure arrest, transfer, or conviction of these people men in a court of law. We want these men to look into the eyes of their victims and answer for their actions.

Can it work? You bet it can. Two weeks ago, one of the most notorious and brutal rebels in the DRC voluntarily surrendered to our Embassy in Rwanda shortly after being named to the War Crimes Reward Programs list. Now Bosco Ntaganda is charged by the International Criminal Court with war crimes and crimes against humanity. I would have been announcing a reward for him today, but instead, he is sitting in a cell at The Hague. He realized it was better to face justice under the law than live on the run as a wanted man any longer.

I refuse to accept a world where those responsible for crimes of this magnitude live in impunity. We will keep working to hold them accountable and deliver justice to all the people they have hurt.

Nowhere will thugs and war criminals who terrorize children be safe -- not for long anyways.

And starting today, their lives on the run -- always looking over their shoulder -- include an even greater prize on their head.

Impunity is the enemy of peace. Accountability is essential to preventing atrocities from taking place in the future. We are putting all those who would violate these simple principles on notice: Your days are numbered.

Now, to all of you here who helped me push for action last April -- this April let's renew our commitment to bring every war criminal to justice. Onward.

President Obama Welcomes Singapore Prime Minister Lee to White House

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 02 April 2013

Washington – President Obama welcomed Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to the White House April 2 to hear the Singaporean's "advice and good counsel" as the United States rebalances its strategic focus to the Asia-Pacific region.

Obama said U.S.-Singapore military ties are "extremely close," and he thanked Singapore for providing facilities that enable the United States to maintain an effective

military presence in the region.

Obama said Singapore is an outstanding economic partner for the United States. "Over the last decade since we signed our free-trade agreement, we have seen a doubling of trade between our countries, and that creates jobs here in the United States as well as Singapore," he said. He added that Singapore provides a "steady vision" of how countries in the Asia-Pacific region can cooperate for the prosperity and security of all parties and is a strong supporter of international norms for trade.

"Across the board, we have very much appreciated the extraordinary relationship between our two countries," Obama said.

Lee said Singapore and the United States engage in "broad and deep cooperation" involving education, infrastructure, development, trade, counterterrorism and defense. He said Singapore is "very happy" that the United States is rebalancing toward Asia on multiple fronts: security, economic, cultural and educational.

Lee described the U.S.-China relationship as "perhaps the most important bilateral relationship in the world." He said Singapore will do its part to help the United States "engage the region constructively, productively and in a way which fosters stability and prosperity for all countries."

U.N. Treaty Will Set Controls over Global Arms Trade

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 02 April 2013

Washington – The United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly passed the first global arms trade treaty aimed at addressing the adverse effects of international arms sales on global peace and stability.

Secretary of State John Kerry welcomed the treaty, which he described as "a strong, effective and implementable Arms Trade Treaty that can strengthen global security while protecting the sovereign right of states to conduct legitimate arms trade."

In an April 2 statement, Kerry said the treaty will establish a global standard to regulate the \$70 billion per year conventional arms trade.

"It will help reduce the risk that international transfers of conventional arms will be used to carry out the world's worst crimes, including terrorism, genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes," Kerry said.

According to press reports, the treaty passed with 154 votes in favor and 23 abstentions. Only Iran, Syria and North Korea voted against it.

The treaty prohibits states from exporting conventional weapons in violation of arms embargoes. It also requires them to develop control systems and review sales contracts to help prevent those exports from being sold on the black market or used for human rights abuses, terrorism and organized crime.

Countries that ratify the treaty will be required to issue an annual public report on their export of conventional weapons, according to press reports.

The measure will reportedly cover exports of tanks, armored combat vehicles, large-caliber weapons, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles and launchers, small arms and light weapons.

Countries will be able to ratify the treaty beginning in June, and it will go into effect 90 days after 50 nations have joined, according to press reports.

Speaking to reporters March 28, Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation Thomas Countryman said that although he does not expect the treaty to immediately reduce violence, its requirements will make a difference.

"I think over time as more states take action not only to have more effective controls on their own legal exports but also, as this treaty calls for, take more effective action against black market arms brokers and cooperate against the diversion of weapons, I think it will contribute to a reduction of violence," he said.

Fight Illicit Trade with Public-Private Partnerships, U.S. Says

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 02 April 2013

Washington — The United States is urging international action to fight illicit trade that is spreading at an alarming rate and undermining global growth and stability.

Illicit trade covers everything from counterfeit designer bags to bogus medicines, weapons and humans themselves.

"No single government or company can design and implement an effective solution to this complex problem alone, nor does any single entity have a complete understanding of how vast the problem really is," David Luna, the director of the State Department's anti-crime programs, said at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris April 2.

Public-private partnerships offer the tools to shut down the global illegal economy, which accounts for 8 percent to 15 percent of the world's gross domestic product, he said.

Luna said the cumulative effect of illicit trade is more devastating than terrorist attacks, natural disasters and factory fires.

"We experience their impact every day: when governments cannot afford to provide vital public services because customs revenues are being siphoned away by smugglers, criminals and corrupt officials; when people die because the drug they were told would cure malaria actually contains chalk," he said.

A book, *Illicit*, published by the editor of Foreign Policy magazine, Moisés Naím, in 2005, alerted the world to the danger posed by illicit trade. It documented how illicit trade has been growing many times faster than legal trade since the 1990s and is redefining economic relationships, borders and the role of workers, managers, armies and governments.

Luna said the United States looks forward to working with businesses and governments in the 34 countries that belong to the OECD to develop innovative ways to combat illicit trade.

"When illicit actors and networks continue to profit from drugs, criminal activities and corruption, legitimate commerce loses out as the illegal economy expands and the legitimate one shrinks. This is an outcome we cannot afford in these austere financial times," Luna said.

U.S. Shapes Climate Change Response Plans

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 29 March 2013

Washington — The Obama administration is developing action plans to adapt to and lessen the impact of climate change, with two reports issued by different government entities in late March.

The recommendations emerging from the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) and the Department of Interior follow through on a priority that was front and center in President Obama's State of the Union address delivered in January.

"For the sake of our children and our future, we must do more to combat climate change," President Obama said. He urged the Congress to address climate change through legislation, but also said the administration would look at implementing executive actions — those not requiring congressional approval — "to reduce pollution, prepare our communities for the consequences of climate change and speed the transition to more sustainable sources of energy."

On March 22, the PCAST issued recommendations for a strategy that would work both to reduce the rate and degree of climate change and minimize the damage that is

anticipated.

PCAST offered six recommendations focused on improving preparedness for extreme weather events and a transition to a national energy strategy less reliant on the carbon-based fuels. An international scientific consensus has concluded that carbon dioxide emissions from human activity are trapping heat in the atmosphere and causing a gradual planetary warming.

PCAST recommends continued efforts to "decarbonize the economy" and create a better regulatory and tax framework for emerging clean-energy and energy-efficient technologies.

Ongoing investments in research and deployment of new technologies are also suggested by PCAST. The scientific advisers also recommend that the United States strive to establish a position of leadership in the international effort to address climate change.

Recommendations emerging from the Department of the Interior March 26 are intended to address climate change as it unfolds for agriculture, fisheries, resource management and wildlife conservation and recreation.

"Rising sea levels, warmer temperatures, loss of sea ice and changing precipitation patterns – trends scientists have connected to climate change – are already affecting the species that we care about, the services we value and the places we call home," said Deputy Secretary of the Interior David J. Hayes as he unveiled the new National Fish, Wildlife and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy March 26. "The strategy is a comprehensive, multipartner response that takes a 21st-century approach developed by the American public for sustaining fish, wildlife and plant resources and the services they provide – now and into the future."

The climate adaptation strategy emerges from an "extensive national dialogue" conducted over almost two years, involving input from more than 55,000 Americans, Interior said. With a 2009 directive from the Congress, the Department of Interior, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and representatives from fish and wildlife agencies around the country worked together to develop responses to a changing climate.

The report documents in considerable detail how climate change is unfolding in a variety of U.S. ecosystems and how it is affecting the life forms therein and the people whose lives and livelihoods may depend on them.

"Geese are not migrating as far south and ducks are migrating later in the fall, to the dismay of waterfowl hunters," the report says. "Oyster larvae are failing to survive off the coast of Washington State, threatening the

shellfish industry. Fish stocks along the east coast have moved northward and deeper as ocean temperatures have increased, affecting fishers and fishing communities."

In deserts, forests, scrubland, waterways and more, the report documents the changing characters of ecosystems that can be traced to climate change. It is unequivocal in its call for action.

"Unless the nation begins serious adaptation efforts now, we risk losing priceless living systems – and the countless benefits and services they provide – as the climate changes," the report says.

The goals outlined by the strategy aim to minimize the impact of climate change on natural resources where possible and to maximize opportunities where the effects of climate change might be beneficial. The goals call for conservation and effective management of habitat to sustain the resources and maintain a balance for sustainable use of the resources. Increasing knowledge, motivating action and enabling species adaptation to climate change effects are also cited as goals.

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