

American

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U.S. Offers Reward for Leaders of Lord's Resistance Army

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 30 May 2013

Washington — The U.S. government is offering a reward of up to \$5 million for information leading to the arrest, transfer or conviction of three leaders of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which has been committing atrocities in central Africa and the Great Lakes region of the continent.

Speaking to the United Nations Security Council May 29, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan Rice cited the reward under the War Crimes Rewards Program and identified the three LRA leaders as Joseph Kony, Okot Odhiambo and Dominic Ongwen.

"The LRA has killed, maimed, and displaced thousands. It has abducted children and forced them to commit unspeakable horrors. It has destroyed families and communities. Its acts are unconscionable and must be stopped once and for all," Rice said.

"Our goal of permanently ending the LRA threat is within reach, but it will require sustained regional leadership and international support," she added.

Rice said the LRA continues to wreak havoc in a number of countries, especially the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where the LRA carried out 54 attacks between January and March. She urged the DRC military, the forces of the African Union's regional task force — Uganda, South Sudan and the Central African Republic (CAR) — and the U.N. Stabilization Mission for the DRC to strengthen coordination to combat the LRA.

Those groups, Rice said, need to expand their patrols and increase information sharing to crush the LRA, which began operating in Uganda in 1986. She urged the groups to develop a common picture of how the LRA operates and investigate its logistical networks and possible illicit sources of funding.

Rice said the crisis in the CAR could reverse the progress in the fight against the LRA. She called for the African Union's regional task force against the LRA to resume operations in the CAR as soon as possible so that LRA members do not have a chance to regroup.

Rice said that the CAR bears the primary responsibility for protecting civilians and must do much more in this regard, especially in protecting women and children.

Rice also said that the U.S. government is concerned about piracy in the Gulf of Guinea because of the threat to the security of the region. She expressed support for the work of the U.N. Office of Central Africa to build capacity of governments to combat piracy.

USAID, Partner Create Plan for Healthier Burma

29 May 2013

Washington — The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) signed an agreement May 27 with the Procter & Gamble company to protect the lives of women and children in Burma.

USAID and P&G will seek to develop a multi-year Global Development Alliance that will invest at least \$2 million over the first two years to provide access to 200 million liters of clean drinking water, promote better hygiene behaviors, and build capability linked to improvements in the delivery of maternal and child health services, USAID said in a May 28 press release.

P&G and USAID have previously partnered to provide clean drinking water in countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Malawi, Nicaragua and Pakistan, among others.

The partnership builds on the cooperation between the United States and the government of Burma to improve health and advance prosperity for the Burmese people, USAID said. It also builds on USAID's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and the Global Child Survival Call to Action aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality rates by ending preventable child deaths and improving the lives of women and children worldwide.

In March, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah launched Burma's first public-private partnership in support of the Child Survival Call to Action.

"Partnerships harness the resources, expertise, innovation and experience of professional associations, universities, and the public and private sector to help mothers, newborns, and children survive and thrive. We are proud to announce today another Global Development Alliance. With our partner Procter & Gamble, we will deliver safe drinking water to targeted communities across Burma in an effort to save the lives of children," Shah said.

Globally, 2,000 children die every day of diarrheal illnesses caused by unsafe water, which is more than the deaths caused by HIV/AIDS and malaria combined.

In Burma, despite increased access to improved drinking water sources between 1990 and 2004, large parts of the population remain vulnerable to diarrheal diseases. During natural disasters such as cyclones, to which Burma is particularly prone, the threat of diarrheal disease outbreaks increase significantly. The USAID partnership will scale up an existing water purification innovation, the P&G Purifier of Water, to significantly reduce the incidence of deaths caused by unsafe water, USAID said.

"P&G is excited to invest in the future of Burma," said Dr. Greg Allgood, founder and director of the P&G Children's Safe Drinking Water program. "We have begun this work by partnering with USAID to provide access to clean drinking water throughout the country with our P&G Purifier of Water packets. This social investment in a healthier, more prosperous Burma is part of our global effort to save one life every hour."

Biden Signs Pact to Broaden Economic Ties with Caribbean

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 29 May 2013

Washington — The United States is seeking deeper investment ties as well as people-to-people ties with the countries of the Caribbean, says Vice President Biden.

During his visit to Trinidad and Tobago, Biden signed on May 28 the United States–Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) on behalf of the United States. President Michel Martelly of Haiti, serving in his capacity as CARICOM chairman, signed on behalf of the 15 member states.

"Our goal is not simply growth, but it's growth that reaches everybody," Biden said at the signing ceremony.

The agreement provides a framework for dialogue on trade and investment issues of mutual interest. It also establishes the United States–CARICOM Trade and Investment Council that will guide implementation of the agreement.

"We are honored that Vice President Biden and Haitian President Martelly signed the TIFA, which provides us with a valuable framework to discuss trade and investment issues," Acting U.S. Trade Representative Miriam Sapiro said in a statement released by her office on May 29. "We will work diligently to strengthen our relationship with CARICOM in order to expand trade and investment, create jobs across the hemisphere, and enhance competitiveness."

The Office of the United States Trade Representative led the negotiation of the agreement for the United States.

The United States, Biden said, "is deeply invested and wants to become more deeply invested in a partnership with all the nations of the Caribbean. Our search for growth, jobs and affordable supplies of energy, our fight against transnational crime and the protection of our climate and our environment — all of these issues have no respect for borders. ... They directly affect the people of my country and each and every one of yours."

Biden noted that the Obama administration is aware that island nations face special difficulties. "The cost of doing

business can be higher, goods are more expensive, and in a globalized world, everything can become more attenuated," he said.

"And so through the Caribbean Basin Initiative, we've eliminated tariffs on 85 percent of your goods," he said, "and now we're looking for additional ways ... to help create growth and diversity in the economies within the Caribbean."

Biden also noted that some Caribbean nations pay three times more for energy than the United States, a factor that stymies economic growth. To overcome this obstacle, Biden said, the United States and many other countries are exploring ways to invest in connected regional grids. The goal is to create economies of scale and renewable energy.

"Last week we signed an [agreement] with Trinidad and Tobago to launch a renewable energy research center here in Trinidad and Tobago for the Caribbean writ large," Biden said. "And we hope to promote clean technologies and energy efficiencies throughout the Caribbean."

To promote both business and personal ties between the United States and the Caribbean, the United States is working to connect diaspora business leaders in the United States with Caribbean entrepreneurs, Biden said.

About 3.6 million "members of a hardworking Caribbean diaspora" call the United States home, Biden said. They send more than \$8 billion in remittances to their native countries in the Caribbean.

"They're also part of the lifeblood and the dynamism of our communities and our country," he said.

Biden said educational access is crucial to economic progress. The Obama administration is working hard to encourage more students from the Caribbean to join the approximately 100,000 students from across the Americas now studying in the United States. In addition, he said, "we hope to send the same number of American students to the rest of the Americas."

Biden was in Trinidad and Tobago as part of a Latin American visit that has already taken him to Colombia. This is Biden's first visit to Trinidad and Tobago. During his 24-hour stop he met with Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar of Trinidad and Tobago as well as with other CARICOM leaders.

Biden next travels to Brazil. Obama administration officials said the trip to the region — Biden's fourth as U.S. vice president — is the latest demonstration of U.S. commitment to reinforcing partnerships in the Americas.

U.S., EU Lead Global Nonproliferation, Biosurveillance Efforts

By Cheryl Pellerin | American Forces Press Service | 29 May 2013

This article was originally published May 28 on the Department of Defense website.

Washington — As nuclear, biological and chemical threats continue to evolve worldwide, partnership between the United States and European Union countries to counter such threats remains critical, a senior Defense Department official said May 28 in Helsinki.

Andrew C. Weber, assistant secretary of defense for nuclear, chemical and biological defense programs, spoke at a meeting of the Atlantic Council on U.S.-European Union cooperation in countering the use of weapons of mass destruction.

The Atlantic Council is a public policy institution founded in 1961 to promote trans-Atlantic cooperation and international security.

"In the coming years," Weber said, "our countries must continue to work together to raise safety and security standards, strengthen the Global Partnership and the [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons], detect and report threats in real time, and promote disarmament."

The Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction consists of 25 countries, including 12 members of the European Union. It works to reduce the global risk.

Such threats, Weber added, "are evolving in ways that affect all of our countries."

Increasing globalization, advances in dual-use technologies, and the emergence of new microbes and drug-resistant pathogens are complicating the ability to meet nonproliferation and counterproliferation goals, the assistant secretary observed.

Advances in technology and the work of illicit networks are making it easier for nonstate actors to access materials needed to produce weapons of mass destruction, he added, and the regimes in Syria and North Korea "are proving that we must maintain our focus on state-sponsored programs."

The European Union and the United States have made firm commitments to addressing the full range of concerns about weapons of mass destruction, Weber said.

"As Finland's 2012 Security and Defense Policy report points out," he continued, "In the era of global challenges the EU and the United States, being close strategic

partners, are expected to cooperate to achieve lasting solutions."

Cooperation is especially important in addressing threats of this magnitude and complexity, he said. "As Finland's defense policy report notes," he added, "the U.S. administration believes strongly in using partnerships and cooperation to mitigate global threats."

Weber called this a guiding principle for efforts to counter weapons of mass destruction threats.

In December, he noted, President Obama said the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program to reduce nuclear, biological and chemical threats is one of the most important U.S. national security programs and a perfect example of the kind of partnerships needed to meet challenges that no nation can address on its own.

"For two decades, our cooperative threat-reduction work focused on the former Soviet Union and on reducing nuclear threats. Since then, it has evolved both geographically and by focus area," Weber said. That evolution, along with other collaborative efforts, is increasing the focus on biological threats, he noted.

"The United States looks forward to working with international partners to launch, enhance and link global networks for real-time biosurveillance, expanding International Health Regulation capabilities across the globe and developing novel diagnostics," he said, adding that many European Union countries with advanced biological-science sectors are helping to build global reporting networks.

Weber said that uniting the health, security and emergency-response sectors in the United States and European Union countries is critical to preparedness for any kind of threat.

"By applying this principal to our international partnerships, both the EU and the United States are contributing to more resilient communities around the world," he added.

The European Union and the United States also lead the world on a path toward disarmament, the assistant secretary said, and strengthening the nonproliferation treaty and other nonproliferation initiatives remains a core principle of their defense strategies.

Weber recognized Finland's leadership on this and its commitment to moving toward a weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone in the Middle East. He also commended the efforts of Ambassador Jaakko Laajava, Finnish undersecretary of state for foreign and security policy, to set the conditions for making this vision a reality.

“For the United States,” he said, “President Obama has set a bold vision for disarmament and continues to prioritize the Nuclear Security Summit process ... [and] established ambitious goals for a world safe and secure from biological threats.”

The assistant secretary quoted part of Obama’s 2012 address before the U.N. General Assembly: “We must come together to prevent and detect and fight every kind of biological danger — whether it’s a pandemic like H1N1, or a terrorist threat, or a treatable disease.”

Under the president’s leadership, Weber said, “the United States now has national strategies for countering biological threats and advancing global biosurveillance capabilities.”

Kerry Unveils \$4 Billion Investment Plan for Palestinians

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 28 May 2013

Washington — Secretary of State John Kerry has announced a plan for private firms to invest \$4 billion in the Palestinian territories to contribute to a solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In a speech at the World Economic Forum in Jordan May 26, Kerry said the investment could expand the Palestinian gross domestic product by as much as 50 percent over three years, cut unemployment from 21 percent today to 8 percent, and increase the median annual wage by as much as 40 percent.

“It is a plan for the Palestinian economy that is bigger, bolder and more ambitious than anything proposed since Oslo, more than 20 years ago now,” Kerry said. The Oslo accord of 1993 provided the framework for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The business leaders, working under the coordination of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, are analyzing the opportunities to invest in tourism, construction, light manufacturing, building materials, energy, agriculture, and information and communication technology, Kerry said. The plan holds the potential to double or triple agricultural output, triple the tourism sector and generate more than 100,000 jobs in housing, much of which will have energy-efficient technology, he added.

“Ultimately, as the investment climate in the West Bank and Gaza improves, so will the potential for a financial, self-sufficient Palestinian Authority that will not have to rely as much on foreign aid,” Kerry said.

The secretary said a thriving Palestinian economy will provide the economic underpinning to support political negotiations for a peace settlement between the Israeli and Palestinian political leaders. “I’m happy to say that both [Israeli] Prime Minister Netanyahu and [Palestinian]

President Abbas support this initiative,” Kerry said.

The secretary said a resolution of the conflict would bring enormous gains in the political and social environment of the region. “With renewed strength, the new neighbor states of Israel and Palestine could actually become another hub in the Middle East for technology, finance, tourism. Israel and Palestine and Jordan together could become an international finance center, attracting companies that simply won’t take that risk today.”

The secretary said the involvement of businesses along with governments in peace and development projects creates a new development model that could be applied to the Sahel, the Maghreb, the Arabian Peninsula and other places.

Kerry said good governance, security and economic opportunity are necessary not only for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian issue but also to meet the generational challenges of the future.

“It’s about whether the massive populations of young people, still growing, has hope that there is something better on the horizon,” Kerry said. “The public and private sectors alike have a fundamental responsibility to meet the demands of this moment.”

Negotiators Cite Progress in Trans-Pacific Trade Pact Talks

28 May 2013

Washington — During the 17th round of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations, which ended May 24 in Lima, Peru, officials reported they continued to forge ahead toward their goal of concluding an ambitious 21st-century agreement in the time frame envisioned by President Obama and the leaders of the other 10 TPP countries.

Through the TPP, the United States is seeking to advance a next-generation trade and investment agreement that will enhance competitiveness and expand trade in the Asia-Pacific region, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) said.

In their work during this 10-day round, negotiators were guided by the plan of action agreed by the trade ministers from the United States and the other TPP countries — Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam — when they met in April on the margins of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in Surabaya, Indonesia.

In line with that plan and the direction of ministers to find pragmatic solutions to outstanding issues, the negotiators made progress across the agreement, USTR said. The negotiating groups covering services, government procurement, sanitary and phytosanitary standards, trade

remedies, labor, and dispute settlement moved their work forward significantly, USTR said. The TPP countries also successfully advanced work on the other legal texts, including technical barriers to trade, e-commerce, rules of origin, investment, financial services, intellectual property, transparency, competition, environment and other issues.

On “the more challenging issues” of intellectual property, competition, and environment, negotiators had productive discussions and agreed on next steps to continue their work, according to USTR.

In addition, negotiators made further progress on building the comprehensive packages that will provide access to their respective markets for industrial, agricultural and textile and apparel products, services and investment, and government procurement. They moved forward in constructing tariff packages and rules of origin, reflecting input from stakeholders on how best to promote trade and regional integration that would benefit companies and workers in the United States and the other TPP countries, USTR said.

The 11 TPP countries also discussed plans for smoothly integrating Japan into the TPP negotiations. Japan will join the negotiations following the successful completion of current members’ respective domestic processes. With Japan’s entry, TPP countries will account for nearly 40 percent of global gross domestic product and about one-third of all world trade, USTR said.

On May 19, the TPP negotiations were temporarily suspended so negotiators could meet with 300 stakeholders from the TPP countries. Stakeholders presented views to negotiators on a wide range of issues under discussion, and met informally with U.S. and other negotiators to provide further input to them, USTR said.

Ministers from the TPP countries will continue to engage regularly over the coming months to guide the negotiators’ work, find solutions to outstanding sensitive issues and ensure that the talks achieve the TPP leaders’ objective of a high-quality, ambitious and comprehensive agreement in 2013.

The 18th round of TPP negotiations will be held in Malaysia, July 15–25.

Energy Efficiency Increasing in U.S. Buildings

28 May 2013

Washington – In businesses, factories, schools and other public buildings, they are dimming the lights and insulating the pipes to increase energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption.

Participants in the Better Buildings Challenge, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy, are reporting a 2.5

percent increase in efficiency since they entered the campaign in 2011. Commercial and industrial buildings account for roughly half of the nation’s entire energy consumption each year.

President Obama’s challenge to partners in this sector is to increase energy efficiency in public and commercial buildings by 20 percent in the year 2020, and double energy productivity by 2030. Energy productivity is defined as the amount of economic output achieved per energy unit consumed.

“The leadership and investments of our Better Buildings partners are demonstrating the promise of energy efficiency by reducing energy costs, helping to create American jobs and increasing competitiveness in the private sector,” said newly installed Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz, as the campaign results were announced May 22.

More than 110 organizations – public, private, commercial and industrial – have taken up the challenge. They work with the Energy Department to achieve energy savings across the range of their operations and facilities and then share their methods with others to multiply the effects. Challenge partners have launched efficiency projects in more than 7,700 facilities, according to an Energy Department press release.

Macy’s, among the nation’s largest retailing chains, has committed close to 16 million square meters of space to the challenge. Several state governments – including Delaware, Massachusetts and North Carolina – are working on energy savings in their agencies’ buildings. Big cities, school districts and university campuses are also taking the efficiency pledge.

Chicago, the nation’s third largest city, is stepping up efficiency in its public spaces at the same time owners of commercial and residential buildings are joining the commitment for efficiency.

Prologis leases business and industrial spaces for distribution and manufacturing purposes to companies worldwide. For its part in the Better Buildings Challenge, Prologis is aiming for increased efficiency in almost 9.3 million square meters, aiming to reduce energy consumption by 20 percent by 2020.

Electric Cars Advance in U.S. as Tesla Motors Repays Loan Early

28 May 2013

Washington – Cleaner vehicles are part of the federal government’s comprehensive plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, build “clean” industries and reduce the nation’s dependence on imported oil, the Department of Energy says.

White House National Security Advisor Tom Donilon said in April that U.S. energy-related greenhouse gas emissions have fallen to 1994 levels “due in large part to our success over the past four years in doubling electricity from renewables, switching from coal to natural gas in power generation and improving energy efficiency.”

The early repayment of a \$465-million loan from the Department of Energy to Tesla Motors, a manufacturer of electric cars, is good news for the future of America’s growing electric vehicle industry, according to Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz.

The loan to Tesla was one of many the department has made to tackle climate change and promote increased use of alternatives to fossil fuels. Many of the nation’s largest and most innovative energy and transportation projects are supported by the Department of Energy’s loan programs, including:

- Several of the world’s largest solar generation facilities and thermal energy storage systems (Ivanpah Solar in California’s Mojave Desert, Agua Caliente Solar in Arizona, Desert Sunlight in California, Abengoa Solana Solar in Arizona, and Solar Reserve Tonopah in Nevada).
- One of the world’s largest wind farms, Shepherds Flat in Oregon.
- The first two all-electric vehicle manufacturing facilities in the United States (Tesla and Nissan).
- The first nuclear power plant to be built in the U.S. in the last 30 years, Plant Vogtle in Georgia.

In the auto industry specifically, the Energy Department said, these investments have made an enormous impact. In June 2009, for example, the department offered more than \$8 billion in conditional loan commitments to three companies – Ford, Nissan and Tesla – to help retool, refurbish, and reopen American auto plants to produce the cars of the future. The results have been impressive:

- The department provided a \$5.9 billion loan to Ford Motor Company to upgrade and modernize 13 factories across six states and to introduce new technologies to raise the fuel efficiency of more than a dozen popular vehicles, representing approximately 2 million new vehicles annually.
- In Smyrna, Tennessee, the first advanced battery packs produced in the United States are coming off the production line of Nissan North America’s production plant, the Energy Department said. These advanced batteries are powering U.S.-made all electric Nissan LEAF cars. The construction of the state-of-the-art battery facility was made possible through a \$1.4 billion loan from the Department of Energy.

Tesla’s \$465 million loan enabled it to reopen a shuttered auto manufacturing plant in Fremont, California, and to produce battery packs, electric motors and other powertrain components. Tesla vehicles have won wide acclaim, including the 2013 Car of the Year from both *Motor Trend* and *Automotive Magazine*, and *Consumer Reports* recently rated Tesla’s Model S as tied for the best car ever rated.

Kerry Urges Israeli, Palestinian Leaders to Restart Peace Talks

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 24 May 2013

Washington – Secretary of State John Kerry has appealed to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to “demonstrate the leadership” needed to restart Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

“I call on both of them in the next days to demonstrate the leadership that I believe the people in the Palestinian Territories and in Israel hope for,” Kerry said in Tel Aviv, Israel, May 24 after meetings with Netanyahu, Abbas and Israeli President Shimon Peres.

Kerry said there are strong constituencies in Israel and the Palestinian Territories for peace with clear understandings of what is required to achieve a lasting settlement of the conflict. “The polls overwhelmingly showed perhaps 68, 72 percent of the people of Israel believed in a two-state solution. Peace is actually possible,” Kerry said.

Israel’s clear priority is security, which the United States firmly supports, Kerry said. For the Palestinians, it is having an independent, sovereign and prosperous state with boundaries roughly following the demarcation line before the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, “with swaps and recognizing changes have taken place on the ground,” he said.

To get an agreement on restarting peace talks, Kerry said, each side “needs to work to build trust and each side needs to refrain from any provocative rhetoric or actions that take us backwards.”

Kerry said the United States and the international community oppose Israel’s continuation of settlement building in the Palestinian Territories, but that does not have to block peace talks.

“If you can negotiate borders, and if you can negotiate security and get to a final settlement, you have resolved the issue of settlements themselves,” he said.

Kerry praised Arab League representatives for their recent policy adjustments supporting Israeli-Palestinian peace. He said he hears a desire for an end to the conflict expressed in every conversation he has with global

leaders.

"It is clear that, in the long run, that status quo is not really sustainable. We all know that the longer it takes to bring about a peaceful end to this conflict, the more and more difficult it will become to do so," he said.

"This is a peace that must be negotiated between Israelis and Palestinians and their elected leadership," Kerry said.

Obama Outlines Evolving U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer | 24 May 2013

Washington — Saying that America is at a crossroads, President Obama outlined an evolving counterterrorism strategy aimed at threats that are lethal yet less capable, at threats to U.S. diplomatic and business interests abroad and at homegrown threats.

It means striking a crucial balance, the president said, between the essential mission to protect the American people from attack, which is the core mission of the U.S. government, while also upholding the nation's most fundamental beliefs in an individual's constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties and the democratic foundation of the rule of law.

"With a decade of experience now to draw from, this is the moment to ask ourselves hard questions about the nature of today's threats and how we should confront them," Obama said in a much-anticipated May 23 speech at the National Defense University at Fort McNair in Washington.

"We must define the nature and scope of this struggle, or else it will define us," he said.

As military operations wind down in Afghanistan through 2014, the United States must define its effort not as a boundless "global war on terrorism," but as a series of persistent, targeted efforts to dismantle specific networks of violent extremists that threaten America, Obama said.

A significant aspect of the best counterterrorism strategy in the past 12 years is cooperation that has resulted from the gathering and sharing of intelligence and the arrest and prosecution of terrorists worldwide, the president said. This involved extensive cooperation from partners and allies in every region of the world.

The United States will continue to aggressively counter terrorists and terrorist groups by leveraging effective global partnerships. The U.S. response cannot depend on military or law enforcement actions alone, he said, but an array of actions involving partners and other nations.

Secretary of State John Kerry said the president's clear

strategy will help to ensure that the United States is meeting the ever-evolving threats to national security at home and abroad. "The struggle against extremism has evolved enormously in the nearly 12 years since 9/11 [the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks] and so too must our defenses," Kerry said.

Obama told the audience of civilian and military leaders in a televised address that no president can promise the total defeat of terrorism: "We will never erase the evil that lies in the hearts of some human beings, nor stamp out every danger to our open society.

"But what we can do, what we must do, is dismantle networks that pose a direct danger to us, and make it less likely for new groups to gain a foothold, all the while maintaining the freedoms and ideals that we defend," he said.

Decisionmaking, the president said, must be made not out of fear, but from hard-earned wisdom learned in more than a decade of struggle and understanding of the current threats.

The first objective, Obama said, is to complete the mission of defeating the threat posed by al-Qaida and its associated forces. A significant part of that is completing the transfer of security operations in Afghanistan to the Afghan National Army and police forces by the end of 2014 in a mutually agreed transfer.

The United States will continue to build on global networks in intelligence gathering, law enforcement, the prosecution of terrorists, and military measures where needed. At its core, the United States prefers the arrest, trial and imprisonment of terrorists, but at times that avenue is closed to authorities, the president said.

The evolving counterterrorism strategy also contains guidance that imposes stricter standards on the use of airstrikes from remotely piloted aircraft, commonly known as drones. The strategy strengthens clear guidelines, oversight and accountability on their use contained in a new Presidential Policy Guidance Directive that Obama signed May 22 on the use of lethal actions against terrorists and terrorist groups.

The president also emphasized his intention to close the military detention center at the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The detention center currently houses 166 detainees. About half have been cleared for return to their home countries, and some will face civil or military trials.

When Obama entered the White House in 2009 he transferred 67 detainees to their home countries or other nations that agreed to accept them as part of his stated goal to eventually close the detention center. Congress imposed legislative restrictions that prevented the further

transfer of detainees, the president said. Former President George W. Bush, during two terms in office, transferred some 530 detainees from the facility.

"Where appropriate, we will bring terrorists to justice in our courts and our military justice system," Obama said. "And we will insist that judicial review be available for every detainee."

As the United States commits to closing the Guantánamo Bay detention facility, Obama said, issues that remain on what to do with those detainees who have participated in dangerous plots or attacks but cannot be prosecuted will be resolved consistent with the American commitment to the rule of law.

Additionally, Obama said, the U.S. strategy involves addressing the underlying grievances and conflicts that feed extremism from North Africa to South Asia. Success, the president said, depends on sustained diplomatic engagement and assistance. Foreign aid amounts to less than 1 percent of the annual U.S. budget and is fundamental to national security, he added.

"For what we spent in a month in Iraq at the height of the war, we could be training security forces in Libya, maintaining peace agreements between Israel and its neighbors, feeding the hungry in Yemen, building schools in Pakistan, and creating reservoirs of goodwill that marginalize extremists," Obama said. "That has to be part of our strategy."

Secretary Kerry said diplomacy and security are not at cross purposes. He said building people-to-people relationships is an essential component of U.S. national interests because it means the United States can solve problems before they reach military crises.

Obama said targeted action against terrorists, effective global partnerships, diplomatic engagement and foreign assistance, in a comprehensive strategy, can reduce the chances of large-scale terrorist attacks on the U.S. homeland and reduce threats to Americans living and working abroad. But the United States also must address the challenge posed from terrorist attacks emanating from within the country's borders, he added.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said in a statement that he has already begun directing the Defense Department to work closely with other U.S. agencies and allies to implement the president's counterterrorism guidance, including efforts to close the Guantánamo detention facility.

First Afghan Female Pilot Graduates from Training

24 May 2013

This article was originally published May 23 on the U.S. Central Command website.

Shindand Air Base, Afghanistan — Afghan Air Force 2nd Lieutenant Niloofar Rhmani made history May 14 when she became the first Afghan woman to complete undergraduate pilot training and earn the status of pilot.

Rhmani, a 21-year-old Kabul native, was one of five UPT Class 12-03 graduates who will proceed to their next level of instruction on the Cessna 208 aircraft.

"I am very proud to have made it," she said. "I am also very proud to be the first female to do it. I had to work hard but want to show that females in my country, we can do it."

The new aviator explained that growing up in Afghanistan as a woman and having dreams of being a pilot came with many challenges, but it was worth all of the sacrifices.

"To be the first at anything is challenging," Rhmani said. "I want to be able to serve with my brothers, shoulder-to-shoulder."

She explained that as long as she can remember she had a passion for the sky and knew becoming a pilot was exactly what she wanted to do.

"My father always wanted to be a pilot — it was his dream — but 40 years ago he couldn't do it," she said. "I wanted to complete his dream for him and become a pilot."

While her father was a driving force for her to get where she is now, her entire family has been there and encouraged her from the beginning.

"They always believed in me and supported me," Rhmani said. "I could not have done it without my family and the instructors."

To be eligible to enter undergraduate pilot training, students must complete an English-as-a-second-language course, which can take from six months to 18 months, depending on the student.

Once accepted, student pilots go through a three-phase program that lasts approximately a year and is modeled on the pilot training used by coalition forces.

"Today is a good day for the Afghan Air Force and Afghanistan," General Mohammad Karimi, chief of general staff of the Afghan National Army, said at the ceremony. "Not only do we graduate pilots today, but better officers to lead. This is important. It is not like equipment. We can buy that. You can't buy people. Lots of time and money goes into training them to be decisionmakers. I am proud of you all and thank you to everyone who helped get them here today."

Rhmani understands that this is only the beginning of a

long and challenging journey.

"It will be tough, but I am not scared," she said.

For someone who broke down boundaries and is creating a new norm, there is no place she would rather be than in the sky, doing what she loves.

"It is peaceful up there; I only concentrate on flying," Rhmani said. "Now my goal is to help my country have a bright future and stand up for females. I helped break down the doors for them after me."

While a lifelong dream has come true for one Afghan woman, her goal is to help those who come after her and encourage them by relaying that the sky is the only limit to what they can do.

Treasury Announces New Sanctions Against Iran

24 May 2013

Washington – The U.S. Department of the Treasury took action May 23 against 20 individuals and entities for their involvement in Iran's nuclear and missile proliferation networks and Iran's continued attempts to circumvent sanctions.

These networks are responsible for moving supplies and providing essential services to Iran's clandestine nuclear and weapons programs, Treasury said in its announcement of the new sanctions. These actions are designed to increase pressure on the Iranian regime by tightening sanctions against Iran's energy sector and exposing key proliferation-related networks that span the globe from Europe to Asia, the department added.

"As long as Iran continues to pursue a nuclear and ballistic missile program in defiance of multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions, the U.S. will target and disrupt those involved in Iran's illicit activities," said Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen. "We will continue to work with our international partners to intensify this pressure and tighten sanctions on Iran's energy sector as it provides much needed financial support for the Iranian regime's proliferation activity."

Fourteen of the entities and individuals are part of Iran's international procurement and proliferation operations, the department said. These designations are being made under Executive Order (E.O.) 13382, which targets weapons of mass destruction proliferators and their supporters.

The designations focus on entities and individuals supporting previously designated entities within Iran's proliferation network as well as Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Naftiran Intertrade Company (NICO), and Iran's Ministry of Defense for

Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL). These organizations are at the center of Iran's continued proliferation activities, Treasury said. The designations include companies supporting IRGC attempts to clandestinely ship illicit cargo around the world, including to Syria. They also target the deputy defense minister and dean of Malek Ashtar University, who is responsible for significant contributions to Iran's missile program, as well as companies and individuals supporting Iran's nuclear program, Treasury said.

Treasury also is identifying Seifollah Jashnsaz, chairman of NICO and director of Hong Kong Intertrade Company and Petro Suisse Intertrade Company SA, as well as five individuals holding other leadership positions in Iran's energy sector. Treasury said these individuals have been involved in Iranian attempts to evade international sanctions and work for the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), NICO, and previously-identified Iranian front companies. Specifically, Treasury said they are being identified as subject to sanctions under E.O. 13599, which, among other things, targets the government of Iran and persons acting for or on behalf of the government.

In 2008, the Treasury Department identified NIOC and NICO, both centrally involved in the sale of Iranian oil, as entities that are owned or controlled by the government of Iran. Additionally, NIOC was determined to be an agent or affiliate of the IRGC in November 2012 and NICO was designated in April 2013 for being owned or controlled by NIOC. To prevent the circumvention of the international community's sanctions on oil trade with Iran, the Department of the Treasury later identified, among others, Switzerland-based Petro Suisse Intertrade Company SA, United Arab Emirates--based Asia Energy General Trading LLC, and Hong Kong--based Hong Kong Intertrade Company as front companies for NIOC or NICO.

U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with the entities and individuals listed and any assets of those persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction are frozen. Additionally, the May 23 designations under E.O. 13382 carry consequences under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (CISADA). Foreign financial institutions that knowingly facilitate significant transactions or provide significant financial services for these sanctioned entities or individuals are exposed to potential loss of access to the U.S. financial system.

The IRGC continues to be a primary focus of U.S. and international sanctions against Iran because of the central role it plays in Iran's ballistic missile and nuclear programs and its involvement in serious human rights abuses, Treasury said. The IRGC was designated under E.O. 13382 in October 2007 for having engaged in proliferation-related activities.

Iran Air was designated under E.O. 13382 in June 2011 for providing support and services to IRGC, MODAFI and Iran's Air Aerospace Industries Organization (AIO). The Treasury Department designated several individuals and entities that have provided support to Iran Air and are part of an Iran Air aircraft procurement and support network. This network is also related to Mahan Air and the IRGC-Qods Force and has provided the support needed by these airlines to continue their operations. These activities have included ferrying military and crowd-control equipment to the Assad regime as it carries out its campaign of violence against the people of Syria, Treasury said. Mahan Air was designated under E.O. 13224 for providing financial, material and technological support to the IRGC-QF.

Three Iran-based companies designated May 23 have an international footprint – Aban Air, DFS Worldwide and Everex – and are actively assisting Iran Air by providing it with financial services, aviation-related procurement and freight forwarding, Treasury said.

Also designated were senior officials of the three companies.

[More information](#) on the designations is available on the Treasury Department website.

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