

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Weekly Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

July 18, 2013

Secretary Kerry Says Projects Forthcoming to Boost Palestinian Economy	1
U.S. Decries Violence Against Journalists	1
Middle East Youth Discover Confidence Through Partnership.....	2
H7N9 Virus Has Pandemic Potential, Researchers Find	3
New Commerce Secretary Participates in U.S.-China Dialogue	4
U.S. Implements Trade Ruling on “Dolphin-Safe” Labeling.....	4
Asian Nations, U.S. Combat Internet Sales of Protected Species	5
U.S.-China Military Ties Growing, U.S. Admiral Says	6

Secretary Kerry Says Projects Forthcoming to Boost Palestinian Economy

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 17 July 2013

Washington — Secretary of State John Kerry says major business leaders and consultants, following their in-depth analysis of the Palestinian economy, are designing projects aimed at doubling the gross domestic product (GDP) in the West Bank and Gaza over the next three years.

Speaking in Amman, Jordan, July 17 with Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh, Kerry said the Obama administration is working with the Palestinians and Israel to look over the group's proposals and identify projects that could receive rapid approval and investment, and have a direct impact on Palestinian unemployment.

The analysis looked at different economic sectors such as tourism, manufacturing, infrastructure, energy and water to devise a "transformative initiative" that will quickly and tangibly affect the lives of Palestinians, he said.

"Our hope is that, over the span of about three years, you could actually reduce the unemployment rate from 21 percent to 8 percent, that you could double the GDP of all of the Palestinian territory," Kerry said.

Earlier in the day, Kerry met with representatives of the Arab League's Peace Initiative Follow-Up Committee to provide them with an update on U.S. efforts to encourage peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

He said that hard, deliberate work is being done away from the public eye and is helping to narrow the significant gaps between the two sides that are standing in the way of the resumption of peace talks.

"There are still some elements and some language that needs to be agreed upon and worked out. This is normal, and I'm not going to detail the specifics. But as this important, quiet process continues to unfold, we want to make sure that we keep it quiet because that's honestly the only way that it works. And everybody has agreed on that," he said.

Peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors "has always been one of the most difficult challenges on the face of the planet," he said, but "while the conflict has indeed persisted for a long time, it is more and more true today than ever before that the time to resolve it is narrowing."

Kerry welcomed the Arab Peace Initiative, first proposed in 2002 by then-Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, which offers peace with Israel in exchange for its withdrawal from land it captured in 1967 and a just settlement for

Palestinian refugees.

The initiative "was a very important departure point and one which never received the full attention and focus that it should have," he said. He added that it could "open up significant potential for normalized relations, for the potential for trade and growth in historic and very important ways" between Israel, its Arab neighbors and other Muslim-majority countries.

"Peace would benefit not only the security and opportunity and legitimate aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians, but very significantly it would contribute enormously to the stability and the prosperity throughout the entire region," Kerry said.

In his remarks with Kerry, Jordanian Foreign Minister Judeh agreed on the effectiveness of pursuing peace away from the public spotlight.

"We have already witnessed in decisive milestones in the Arab-Israeli conflict that some negotiations came to a failure just because of disclosing everything internationally. And I think that the effectiveness of this effort and exercise by John Kerry is that it is away from light, and I think it will result in reviving the negotiations between the two sides and handling all the political solution issues," he said.

Judeh said his government currently sees "a niche of hope" on the prospects of peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

U.S. Decries Violence Against Journalists

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 17 July 2013

Washington — During a July 17 debate at the U.N. Security Council, the United States condemned violence against journalists and called for their protection, especially as they report on armed conflicts.

"Impunity for violence against journalists must end," said Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo, acting permanent representative to the United Nations and chargé d'affaires for the U.S. Mission to the U.N..

"The United States endorses fully the 2012 U.N. Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity," she said. "We encourage member states to enact its provisions and put in place voluntary protection programs for journalists operating in conflict areas."

DiCarlo also called for a gender-sensitive approach when considering measures to address the safety of journalists, saying that women journalists are especially vulnerable to violence.

Under U.N. Resolution 1738, journalists operating in armed conflict areas are protected under international humanitarian law, DiCarlo said. She called on the U.N. secretary-general to increase the focus on the safety and security of journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in reports on the protection of civilians and in reports on peacekeeping missions that have mandates that include civilian protection.

DiCarlo said the United States urges U.N. member states — especially those that contribute troops and police to U.N. peacekeeping missions — to ensure that their judicial officials, law enforcement officers and military personnel know their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law regarding the safety of journalists.

Journalists, DiCarlo said, play an “indispensable role” in focusing the world's attention on conflict. But their jobs are becoming increasingly dangerous, according to U.N. Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson.

Eliasson said more than 600 journalists have been killed in the past decade. “Just 10 days ago,” Eliasson said, “Somali TV journalist Libaan Abdullahi Farah was shot dead on his way home. This murder drew widespread condemnation. But Libaan’s assassination is not an isolated case.”

Eliasson said that last year in Syria alone, 41 journalists, including those who use social media, were killed. In Iraq and Afghanistan, 108 journalists have been killed since 2006.

“Let us remember,” Eliasson said, “that every time a journalist is killed by extremists, drug cartels or even government forces, there is one voice less to speak on behalf of the victims of conflict, crime and human rights abuses. ... It is shocking and unacceptable that more than 90 percent of the assassinations of journalists go unpunished.”

Eliasson also emphasized that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, guaranteed in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Freedom of expression, Eliasson said, “depends on and is nurtured by independent and pluralistic media, the lifeblood of democratic and informed discourse and debate.”

As president of the U.N. Security Council for July, the United States convened the open debate on the protection of journalists to provide Security Council members the opportunity to express their views. This session was unique in that it was the first time that journalists briefed the Security Council in their capacity as media professionals.

Among the journalist who spoke were Richard Engel, chief foreign correspondent for NBC News; Mustafa Haji Abdinur, correspondent for Agence France-Presse; and Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, foreign correspondent for the British national daily the Guardian.

Kathleen Carroll, executive editor and senior vice president for the Associated Press, which has seen 31 of its journalists killed, also addressed the panel.

“Most journalists who die today,” Carroll said, “are not caught in some wartime crossfire; they are murdered just because of what they do.”

Carroll is also vice chair for the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to the global defense of the press. CPJ, she said, has found that most murdered journalists — five in six — are killed in their own hometowns covering local stories, usually crime and corruption.

“They are attacked by people who know their work, and often know them personally,” Carroll said. Yet journalists, she said, represent the ordinary citizen.

“An attack on a journalist,” Carroll said, “is a proxy for an attack on the people, an attack on their right to information about their communities and their institutions.”

Middle East Youth Discover Confidence Through Partnership

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 16 July 2013

This is one in a series of articles about people who have been associated with the State Department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative. In 2013, MEPI marks its 10-year anniversary.

Washington — In a region experiencing a mix of optimism and uncertainty, young people are finding ways to give back to their communities while they pursue their own personal and professional goals, says Nathan Carter, who heads the Arabian Peninsula Regional Office of the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative.

“MEPI has done a great job of creating the type of environment where that is possible — bringing like-minded people together in a way that allows them to create positive change or gain the training and skills they need to make progress on their goals,” said Carter, whose office is in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

MEPI is active in every country in the Middle East and North Africa in which the United States has a diplomatic presence.

One way MEPI keeps active is through grants it awards to regional and local civic groups, activists and business leaders for projects related to political and economic reform. So far, MEPI's Arabian Peninsula Regional Office has contributed more than \$11.3 million to 200-plus projects. Overall, MEPI has invested about \$600 million in more than 1,000 projects.

Grants are for up to \$100,000 each, while larger multicountry grants are for considerably more. Implementers include the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, the American Bar Association and Vital Voices.

Carter said he is impressed to see how much confidence participants gain during the course of a project. "We see people who participate in our programs who may initially seem reticent and unsure of what to say. They have great ideas and solutions, but are not always comfortable expressing them," he said. "After they interact with their peers and learn from the program implementers, you see these same people transform into confident and engaged participants."

Carter said MEPI has expanded its focus since it was established 10 years ago in response to the shifting interests of youth and businesses. Many political education programs have given way to programs in areas like entrepreneurship, business incubation, investing and mentoring.

Carter noted that MEPI doesn't create programs on its own but develops them in partnership with local organizations that know what is relevant in each of the countries it serves throughout the Middle East and North Africa. He added that social media play a growing role among youth, helping them to connect. "It has made the environment more conducive to sharing business ideas or to reach customers," Carter said.

Through its Arabian Peninsula and Mediterranean regional offices, MEPI runs a student leadership exchange program. Each year U.S. embassies in the region recruit a total of about 100 undergraduate students for six-week visits to the United States, where they have opportunities to develop leadership skills and expand their understanding of civil society and the democratic process.

Carter has no doubt that MEPI makes lasting impressions on program participants. "I have met with numerous young people in each of the countries we cover who praise their experiences with MEPI," he said. "It is not uncommon for these people to say their MEPI experience changed their lives and gave them an appreciation for a new level of opportunities that previously [they] did not know even existed."

Participants "become more motivated and committed to achieving their goals because they see that it is possible," he said.

Carter brought to MEPI several years of experience working with local communities and civic groups, and developing public-private partnerships — first in Morocco as a Peace Corps volunteer in the mid-1990s and then with U.S. community economic development through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

MEPI's Arabian Peninsula Regional Office serves Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Its Med Region Regional Office serves Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories and Tunisia.

H7N9 Virus Has Pandemic Potential, Researchers Find

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 15 July 2013

Washington — The H7N9 avian flu virus, which made its first appearance in humans in 2013, has characteristics that could allow it to spread rapidly and widely, according to findings from an international research team led jointly by the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Tokyo.

"H7N9 viruses have several features typically associated with human influenza viruses and therefore possess pandemic potential and need to be monitored closely," said Yoshihiro Kawaoka, a UW-Madison researcher and flu expert. Kawaoka conducted the work with support from the U.S. National Institutes of Health and Japanese ministries with science and health portfolios.

Chinese health authorities have reported 132 verified cases of H7N9, with 43 fatalities, according to the Chinese news agency Xinhua. These are the first known cases where this particular strain of avian influenza has infected humans. All of the cases have appeared in China so far. No new cases have been reported since late May, but the global health community goes into high alert with the appearance of a "novel virus," one that has not been seen in humans before.

Published in the journal *Nature* July 10, the UW-Madison/University of Tokyo research revealed that H7N9 can infect and replicate in several species of mammals, including monkeys and ferrets. The virus was able to transmit from one individual to another among the ferrets involved in the experiment.

Ferrets are like humans in that influenza causes coughing and sneezing and the expulsion of virus-bearing

particulates in the air to infect others. The researchers found this form of transmission among infected ferrets, though it did not occur as efficiently as is typical with other influenza strains commonly seen in humans.

That finding is worrisome, Kawaoka said.

"H7N9 viruses combine several features of pandemic influenza viruses, that is, their ability to bind and to replicate in human cells and the ability to transmit via respiratory droplets," he is quoted as saying in a UW-Madison press release.

If H7N9 develops a capability to transmit more efficiently from person to person, Kawaoka said, "a worldwide outbreak is almost certain, since humans lack protective immune responses to these types of viruses."

Though a couple of clusters of H7N9 cases have occurred, apparently through close contact among intimates, no evidence suggests that H7N9 has developed an ongoing capability for easy transmission.

Kawaoka points out a particularly odd characteristic of H7N9: While it is a strain of avian influenza — made up of the proteins hemagglutinin and neuraminidase — it doesn't cause severe disease in birds. In previous cases where an avian influenza strain infected both poultry and people, illness in the flocks was a clear warning sign that humans might be at risk of exposure. Sick flocks also were reasonably easy to identify as the source where an individual had been exposed.

"H7N9-infected birds will not likely provide a useful warning signal," WHO reported in a June assessment of the virus, "and it may be difficult to determine when a person has been in contact with H7N9-infected poultry."

Human H7N9 cases are apparently linked to direct exposure to live poultry or their contaminated environment, but the WHO assessment said much still must be learned about the routes of transmission and the viral "reservoir," the population in nature that gave rise to this viral strain and continues to harbor it.

The Kawaoka-led research team did conclude its Nature article on a positive note: Most of the strains they tested did show sensitivity to anti-viral medications used against the seasonal flu virus.

New Commerce Secretary Participates in U.S.-China Dialogue

15 July 2013

Washington — The Obama administration's newest Cabinet member, Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker, joined Treasury Secretary Jacob J. Lew, Deputy Secretary

of State William J. Burns and other top U.S. officials at the fifth round of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Washington July 10–11.

Lew led discussions with the Chinese delegation, headed by Vice Premier Wang Yang. They were joined by a delegation of Cabinet members, ministers, agency heads and senior officials from both countries.

Pritzker spoke during the trade and investment session about the importance of ensuring American companies have equal and fair treatment when competing with Chinese companies, according to the Commerce Department. She also attended the joint session on climate change, the promoting economic growth session and a round-table discussion with chief executive officers, where she heard from American companies about the opportunities and challenges of doing in business in China.

Pritzker was sworn in as secretary on June 26. She has more than 25 years of experience in the real estate, hospitality, senior living and financial services industries.

At the Strategic and Economic Dialogue, the United States and China emphasized the importance of promoting a comprehensive economic relationship based on mutual respect and mutually beneficial cooperation. Officials reaffirmed the important commitments made by both countries in previous strategic and economic dialogues.

The two sides announced further measures to support strong domestic and global growth, promote open trade and investment, enhance international rules and global economic governance, and foster financial market stability and reform. The two countries reached consensus to work expeditiously to implement the commitments made and, as the special representatives of the economic track, Commerce said, directed their respective economic teams to take concrete steps before the next Strategic and Economic Dialogue.

U.S. Implements Trade Ruling on “Dolphin-Safe” Labeling

15 July 2013

Washington — U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman says the United States has fully implemented the recommendations and rulings of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in a dispute brought by Mexico on the U.S. dolphin-safe labeling program. The United States informed the WTO of its compliance in a communication to be circulated to WTO members, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) said.

"I am pleased to announce the United States has complied

with the WTO's findings in a way that enhances, and does not weaken, our 'dolphin safe' labeling program," Froman said July 12. "The final rule published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) helps ensure that American consumers continue to receive accurate information regarding whether the tuna in a product labeled 'dolphin safe' was caught in a manner that caused harm to dolphins. These changes demonstrate that the United States can provide consumer information, protect dolphins, and avoid discrimination between WTO members consistent with WTO rules."

In June 2012, the WTO Dispute Settlement Body adopted findings by a WTO panel and the Appellate Body that the U.S. dolphin-safe labeling program was, in some respects, inconsistent with U.S. WTO obligations. In particular, the WTO adopted findings that the dolphin-safe labeling requirements were inconsistent with nondiscrimination obligations to accord imported products treatment no less favorable than that accorded to like domestic products or products of other WTO members. The WTO found that the dolphin-safe labeling requirements were not "evenhanded" in the treatment of tuna harvested in different oceans, USTR said.

The amendments to the regulations address this concern by requiring as a new condition to use the label certification that no dolphins were killed or seriously injured during fishing operations occurring outside the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean (ETP). These requirements already exist for fishing operations inside the ETP. Thus, the amendments to the regulations are evenhanded and will contribute further to the protection of dolphins regardless of where they swim, bringing the dolphin-safe labeling requirements into compliance with U.S. WTO obligations, USTR said.

The period of time for the United States to comply with the WTO ruling expired on July 13, 2013, and the final rule by NOAA is effective on that date. NOAA's final rule is available on the U.S. Government Printing Office website.

LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR DOLPHINS

Enacted in 1990, the U.S. Dolphin Protection Consumer Information Act (DPCIA) established a dolphin-safe labeling standard for tuna products. The law addressed a congressional finding that "consumers would like to know if the tuna they purchase is falsely labeled as to the effect of the harvesting of the tuna on dolphins." The DPCIA sets out minimum criteria for when tuna product producers, importers, exporters, distributors or sellers may label their product dolphin-safe or with any other similar term or symbol suggesting that the tuna contained in the product were harvested using a method of fishing that is not harmful to dolphins.

Dolphins also have other protections under other U.S. laws. In 1972, Congress enacted the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which greatly reduced the annual dolphin bycatch by U.S. vessels fishing for tuna with purse-seine fishery in the eastern Pacific.

The act prohibits most takings of marine mammals, including dolphins, in U.S. waters and by U.S. citizens on the high seas, and bans importation of marine mammals and marine-mammal products into the United States.

Other legal protections for dolphins include the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which protects all species of dolphin, and the U.S. Endangered Species Act, under which some dolphins are listed as endangered.

Asian Nations, U.S. Combat Internet Sales of Protected Species

12 July 2013

Washington — Scores of wildlife traffickers face federal and state charges for selling protected species online during summer 2012. In a July 11 announcement, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) said the charges follow a coordinated undercover law enforcement operation it led that involved officers from 16 U.S. states, three federal agencies and three Asian countries.

Operation Wild Web resulted in 154 arrests in the United States: 30 involving federal wildlife crimes and 124 for violations of state wildlife laws. It also exposed online trafficking of live birds and tiger and leopard pelts in Southeast Asia, where law enforcement participation was coordinated by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN). ASEAN-WEN says it is the world's largest wildlife law enforcement network and involves police, customs and environmental agencies of all 10 ASEAN countries.

"Our message is clear and simple: The Internet is not an open marketplace for protected species," said Edward Grace, the USFWS deputy assistant director for law enforcement. "State partners and our ASEAN-WEN counterparts were essential to the success of this operation, and that cooperation remains critical to disrupting wildlife trafficking on the Web and elsewhere."

Over 14 days from August 8 to August 22, 2012, around 70 USFWS special agents and conservation officers from state wildlife agencies across the country teamed up to investigate illegal online commerce in wildlife. Agents from the National Park Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration helped staff some of the 14 task forces operating in the United States. Wildlife officers in Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia simultaneously ran

their own Operation Wild Web task forces targeting illegal wildlife Internet sales.

The operation was aided by noninvestigative assistance from the Humane Society of the United States and the International Fund for Animal Welfare in the United States and by the Freeland Foundation and Wildlife Conservation Society in Southeast Asia, USFWS said.

Wildlife and wildlife products seized by USFWS agents during Operation Wild Web included the pelts of endangered big cats such as the Sumatran tiger, leopard and jaguar; live migratory birds; sea turtle shells and sea turtle skin boots; whale teeth; elephant ivory; migratory bird mounts; walrus ivory; and other items, USFWS said. The intercepted transactions involved more than \$60,000 of wildlife contraband.

U.S. federal laws regulating the sale of wildlife include the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (which prohibit any commercialization of protected birds); the Endangered Species Act (which bans the interstate or international sale of listed species and most products made from them); the Marine Mammal Protection Act (which limits the sale of marine mammal parts and products other than those crafted by Native Alaskans); and the Lacey Act (which makes it a federal crime to transport wildlife or their products across state boundaries if they have been sourced in violation of state law).

Federal prosecutions based on Operation Wild Web have been completed or are being conducted by the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California and other U.S. attorney offices throughout the United States. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission played major roles in the task force operations in those states, USFWS said.

The USFWS's International Affairs program coordinates domestic and international efforts to protect, restore and enhance the world's diverse wildlife and their habitats with a focus on species of international concern. The service has international responsibilities under some 40 treaties and U.S. laws and regulations. Located within International Affairs, the Wildlife Without Borders program and the International Wildlife Trade program promote conservation across the globe.

U.S.-China Military Ties Growing, U.S. Admiral Says

12 July 2013

This article was originally posted to the Defense Department website on July 11.

Washington — The military-to-military relationship

between the United States and China is deepening in a "quite commendable" way that may help improve overall engagement between the two countries, Navy Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III, commander of U.S. Pacific Command, told Pentagon reporters July 11.

During a news briefing, Locklear said he has spent the week here taking part in security, strategic and economic dialogues with Chinese officials, the last two gatherings hosted by the State Department.

"I think that the progress that we're making between our two militaries is quite commendable," the admiral said. "It's commendable because we are able to have very good dialogue on areas where we converge, and there are a lot of places where we converge as two nations, and we're also able to directly address in a matter-of-fact way where we diverge."

Those divergences are where the friction points occur, he said.

"And friction points are where militaries that understand each other can maybe not solve the friction," Locklear added, "but they can manage it so that diplomacy can continue to work."

Locklear said both China's military, the People's Liberation Army, and the U.S. military, starting with his own Pacific-based troops, understand that and are committed to it.

"I think that alone is significant progress," he said.

Locklear said the growing relationship is evident in events such as a large humanitarian relief exercise in which both nations' navies recently took part.

"U.S. and PLA ships and forces were working side-by-side," he said. "That's substantial."

Locklear noted the Navy's USS Shiloh, a guided missile cruiser, completed a port visit in China. Pacific Command, he added, will open port visits for Chinese ships in the future, though dates have not yet been confirmed.

He noted that China has agreed to participate in the Rim of the Pacific exercise in 2014. "That's a big step for the Chinese military, Chinese navy," Locklear said. "They'll be entering a multinational three-week-long exercise that's basically run by the U.S. from the 3rd Fleet headquarters."

The Chinese sailors will be near Hawaii for the exercise and thus a long way from home, the admiral said.

"But they're excited about it," he said. "They're excited about coming and participating. And we wish them all the success."

In response to a reporter's question, Locklear said the two nations' forces "have been able to conduct operations around each other in a very professional and increasingly professional manner," especially in areas close to China. As China's maritime capabilities increase, he said, the ongoing dialogue between it and the United States about rules of the road will become more crucial.

Because relatively young and inexperienced troops from both countries will encounter each other more often as China increases its reach and "the U.S. presence in the Asia-Pacific is not going anywhere," Locklear said, "... we have to manage our ability to operate around each other."

The admiral acknowledged China has a sophisticated ballistic missile program, and that it will likely acquire increasingly sophisticated military equipment as its reach continues to grow.

"We're already seeing some examples of that," he said. "We're seeing Chinese operating today in places beyond the first and second island chain that we wouldn't have seen before. We've seen them be able successfully do [anti-piracy] operations alongside of us in the Gulf of Aden. I think it's a natural thing as their global, economic power grows for them to have security interests that go beyond their backyard."

The Chinese military is not a threat, but an opportunity, Locklear said in response to a question.

"If opportunity is not realized, then, as it would be with any other ... growing military, it potentially could become a threat," he said. "But I certainly view it and approach it as an opportunity. That's really the only best path forward."

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