

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## U.S., Russia Can Make Bilateral Progress, DOD Official Says

By Jim Garamone | American Forces Press Service |  
05 September 2013

*This article was originally published on the Defense Department website on September 5.*

Washington — The United States and Russia disagree on some aspects of their bilateral relations, but there are many areas where the countries can and do cooperate, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia told the Heritage Foundation September 4.

The relationship has been marked by ups and downs, Evelyn N. Farkas said, and that is normal. The idea, she added, is to work through these disagreements.

“We will continue to work with Russia to find mutually acceptable solutions,” Farkas said in her prepared remarks. “We’ve been managing a significant disagreement with the Russians over Syria.”

Still, Farkas said, American officials want to bolster defense cooperation. The United States wants to work on counterproliferation issues with Iran, North Korea, and on counterterrorism and counternarcotics in regions adjacent to Russia.

“Our level of interaction with Russia has increased substantially with the establishment of the Defense Relations Working Group in September 2010,” she said. “The working group is intended to create mechanisms for discussion and exchange at the policy level between defense professionals on a range of issues, including defense reform and modernization, missile defense cooperation, defense technology cooperation, and global and regional security issues of mutual interest.”

Increased cooperation on Afghanistan tops the U.S. wish list, Farkas said. “Working to bring improved stability to Afghanistan is clearly in U.S. and Russian interests, and Russia continues to be supportive by expanding the Northern Distribution Network and allowing for diversification in the types of cargo that can pass through its territory,” she explained. “The U.S. and Russia continue working together to disrupt al-Qaida’s and other terrorist groups’ operational networks and undermine their access to financial resources.”

Continued cooperation to combat piracy off the Horn of Africa also is a U.S. goal, Farkas said.

Even in areas of disagreement there must be conversations, Farkas said. Both Russia and the United States agree that the civil war in Syria should end, she

noted, but Russia supports the regime of Bashar Assad. “Both of our countries have been adamant that we remain committed to working with each other to bring the parties together to negotiate a political settlement,” she said.

Russia continues to express concern that U.S. and NATO missile defenses could pose a threat to Russia’s strategic deterrent, Farkas said, and Russian leaders also question whether Iran really poses a threat.

“We continue to assure Russia that our missile defense efforts are not directed against Russia, nor do they pose a threat to its strategic nuclear deterrent,” she said. “And we continue to make the case that the transparency and cooperation we are offering are the best way for Russia to gain the confidence it seeks that our missile defenses do not threaten Russia’s strategic deterrent.”

Continuing talks on nuclear arms reductions also is important, Farkas said. “We have made clear our willingness to discuss the full range of strategic stability issues of concern to both our countries, and we will continue to seek opportunities to make progress on this agenda,” she added.

Farkas echoed a statement President Obama made yesterday in Stockholm on U.S.-Russian relations, citing areas in which U.S. and Russian interests overlap.

The president pointed to progress the two nations have made in the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, in Russia joining the World Trade Organization and in close cooperation on counterterrorism issues. Russia has also provided logistical support to U.S. and NATO forces based in Afghanistan.

Still, the president acknowledged, relations have cooled recently over Syria and over Russia granting asylum to National Security Agency leaker Edward Snowden. “But I have not written off the idea that the United States and Russia are going to continue to have common interests even as we have some very profound differences on some other issues,” Obama said. “And where our interests overlap, we should pursue common action. Where we’ve got differences, we should be candid about them — try to manage those differences, but not sugarcoat them.”

## In Sweden, Obama Stresses Common Ties, Need for Action in Syria

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 04 September 2013

Washington — During the first bilateral visit of a U.S. president to Sweden, President Obama emphasized the partnerships between the two democracies on clean energy and climate change, as well as the need for the international community to end the “barbarism” in Syria.

"We share a belief in the dignity and equality of every human being," Obama said during a September 4 joint press briefing in Stockholm with Sweden's prime minister, Fredrik Reinfeldt.

Speaking of the chemical weapons attacks the United States is convinced the Syrian government has launched against its opponents, Obama said: "The prime minister and I are in agreement that in the face of such barbarism, the international community cannot be silent and that failing to respond to this attack would only increase the risk of more attacks and [the] possibility that other countries would use these weapons as well."

The Obama administration has advocated military strikes as a response to the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons. The White House is currently working to secure congressional backing to take action and build international support to hold the Assad regime accountable.

The question the world faces, Obama said, is "at what point do we say we need to confront actions that are violating our common humanity? And I would argue that when I see 400 children subjected to gas, over 1,400 innocent civilians dying senselessly in an environment in which you already have tens of thousands dying, and we have the opportunity to take some action that is meaningful, even if it doesn't solve the entire problem, may at least mitigate this particular problem, then the moral thing to do is not to stand by and do nothing."

Obama said he and Reinfeldt have discussed their "broader strategy" in dealing with Syria.

"The United States and Sweden are both major donors of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people," Obama said. "We will continue those efforts. We're going to continue to try to strengthen the capabilities of an inclusive and representative opposition and to support the diplomacy that could bring an end to all the violence and advance a political transition and a future in Syria where all people's rights are upheld.

"Those are goals that we share, and we will keep working towards those goals," Obama said.

### **Secretaries Kerry, Hagel Make Case for Military Action Against Syria's Assad**

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

Washington — Inaction by the United States in the aftermath of the Syrian government's deadly chemical weapons attack August 21 that killed 1,429 of its own people would send a signal that using weapons of mass destruction is permitted, Secretary of State John Kerry

said before a Senate committee.

At a Senate hearing September 3, Kerry, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Army General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified in an effort to gain congressional support for a proposed military response to the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad's use of the nerve agent sarin against Syrian civilians.

At the White House, President Obama announced August 31 that he would seek support from the U.S. Congress before making a limited military response in Syria. Additional congressional hearings are scheduled during the week of September 2 by other committees of the Senate and House of Representatives. A vote in both chambers on a resolution supporting military action is not scheduled until the week of September 9, after all members of Congress return to Washington following an August recess.

"We're here because a dictator and his family's personal enterprise, in their lust to hold on to power, were willing to infect the air of Damascus with a poison that killed innocent mothers and fathers and hundreds of their children, their lives all snuffed out by gas in the early morning of August 21," Kerry said.

Kerry told members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the international Chemical Weapons Convention and similar international security agreements would be nearly worthless if civilized nations failed to respond when chemical weapons are used. "Norms and laws that keep the civilized world civil mean nothing if they're not enforced," he said.

"If the world's worst despots see that they can flout with impunity prohibitions against the world's worst weapons, then those prohibitions are just pieces of paper. That is what we mean by accountability and that is what we mean by we cannot be silent," the secretary said.

Kerry told senators that President Obama is not asking America to go to war, but is seeking authorization to degrade and deter Bashar al-Assad's capacity to use chemical weapons.

Under a resolution developed by the Senate committee, the president would be authorized to conduct a military response up to 60 days with an option for an additional 30 days, but with the condition that no U.S. combat troops would be deployed to Syria.

"We have pursued a course of action that gives the president the authority he needs to deploy force in response to the Assad regime's criminal use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people, while assuring that

the authorization is narrow and focused,” Senate Foreign Affairs Chairman Bob Menendez, a Democrat from New Jersey, said September 3. Menendez drafted the measure with Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee, the panel’s senior Republican.

“We have an obligation to act, not witness and watch while a humanitarian tragedy is unfolding in plain view,” Menendez said.

Nearly 98 percent of the nations of the world have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, which expressly prohibits the use of such weapons worldwide, but Syria remains one of four nations that have not signed or ratified the treaty. The ban on the use of chemical weapons came about in the aftermath of World War I, when chemical weapons were used on the battlefields of Europe.

According to U.S. intelligence sources and an array of international, regional and Syrian groups, the Assad regime attacked a number of opposition-held sections of East Damascus on August 21 with rocket and artillery barrages that contained chemical warheads using sarin – a colorless, tasteless and odorless liquid that easily turns into gas and causes death by attacking the nervous system and interfering with muscles involved in breathing.

Defense Secretary Hagel told senators that the Syrian regime’s use of chemical weapons poses grave risks to U.S. friends and partners along Syria’s borders, creating a serious regional security threat. He noted that if Assad is willing to use chemical weapons against his own people, then the United States has to be concerned that terrorist groups like Hezbollah, which has forces in Syria supporting the Assad regime, could acquire them and use them elsewhere.

“This risk of chemical weapons proliferation poses a direct threat to our friends and partners, and to U.S. personnel in the region,” Hagel testified. “We cannot afford for Hezbollah or any terrorist group determined to strike the United States to have incentives to acquire or use chemical weapons.”

Hagel argued that the Syrian regime’s actions risk eroding the nearly century-old international norm against the use of chemical weapons – a norm that has helped protect the United States homeland and American forces operating across the globe from these deadly weapons.

Syria has the largest chemical weapons program and stockpile of agents in the Middle East – including mustard gas, sarin and VX – and has thousands of munitions that can be used to deliver chemical warfare agents. The Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Center (SSRC) – which is subordinate to the Syrian Ministry of

Defense – manages Syria’s chemical weapons program, according to an unclassified assessment provided by the White House August 30 in Washington.

According to the United Nations, more than 100,000 people have been killed in the ongoing civil conflict, which began in March 2011 when the Assad regime used the Syrian army to crack down on peaceful civilian protests.

## **G20 Summit in Russia Will Focus on Global Economic Growth**

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer |  
03 September 2013

Washington – Leaders from the Group of 20 (G20) advanced and emerging economies, who are meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia, September 5 and 6, are expected to focus on the importance of global economic growth and job creation, a senior Obama administration official says.

“The economic context for this discussion is very different from last year,” a senior official said during a recent White House background briefing on the trip. “It will be the first one since November 2010 that will not be dominated by urgent measures to resolve the financial crisis, initially in the United States and then in Europe.”

Before attending the G20 Russia Summit, President Obama will meet September 4 and 5 with Swedish and other Nordic leaders in Stockholm to discuss climate change, defense and security cooperation, global development, and trade, a senior administration official says.

The Russia Summit will be the seventh G20 summit Obama has attended since taking office in 2009.

“Turning to a few other initiatives this year, one is work in this forum to prevent tax evasion – illegal tax evasion and legal tax avoidance, which is when companies use legal loopholes to reduce or avoid taxes,” the official said. The United States has been a world leader in passing and implementing legislation that increases disclosure requirements for individuals and financial institutions to crack down on illegal tax evasion, the administration official said.

The Obama administration hopes to convince others in the G20 to adopt a similar disclosure standard globally, he added.

“We will also be working in St. Petersburg to get support globally for the kinds of measures that we have laid out for countries to close tax loopholes and avoid a race to the bottom where tax competition leads countries to lose revenue and companies to make inefficient decisions

when they locate where they pay the lowest tax," the official said.

He said that discussions among G20 leaders need to include addressing the world's poor, financial inclusion and food security. "We'll also look forward to making progress on the president's climate change agenda and on work to reduce corruption internationally."

Another senior administration official noted that going into this economic summit, the U.S. economy is in the strongest position of any time since the G20 began, while also achieving considerable fiscal consolidation. The U.S. economy has expanded for four years, with private demand growth averaging 3 percent in recent years, and private employers have added more than 7 million jobs.

Administration officials also said the Obama administration's approach to putting jobs and growth at the center of its economic policies has had the best impact on spurring the recovery from one of the nation's deepest recessions since the 1930s.

"We need to rededicate ourselves to promoting a lasting rebalancing of global demand," the official said. "We welcome signs that Europe's long recession is ending and their critical steps to restore financial stability."

The administration official also noted changes that have transformed the global financial regulatory system since the height of recession in 2009. "Four years later, we've made substantial progress in implementing that internationally consistent framework of reforms in each of our financial systems," he added.

While meeting with Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt September 4, Obama is expected to discuss global climate change efforts, international military operations, support for democracy and civil society in Europe and the Middle East, and global development, the senior administration official said.

Obama also plans to meet privately with King Carl XVI Gustaf and attend a dinner hosted by Sweden with other Nordic leaders from Finland, Denmark, Iceland and Norway.

The president also will highlight Sweden's technical research programs and celebrate Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, who is credited for saving at least 20,000 Jews during the Holocaust before disappearing after being detained by authorities in the former Soviet Union near the end of World War II, senior administration officials said.

#### **ABOUT THE G20**

G20 countries represent about 80 percent of the gross domestic product globally and nearly 80 percent of world

trade. They also represent two-thirds of the world's population.

Members of the G20 include the European Union and the following 19 countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the Republic of Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. The G20 also includes the members of the Group of Eight most advanced economies – Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States. The organization was formed in 1999.

#### **U.S. Works on Greater Energy Efficiency, More Renewables**

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 30 August 2013

Washington – If manufacturers made refrigeration appliances that were more efficient, consumers would pay less and pollute less when using them. The Obama administration has put forth proposed new requirements for appliance manufacturers to meet to realize those savings.

The White House announced August 29 that the rule changes the government proposes would cut energy bills by up to \$28 billion and cut generation of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) by more than 350 million metric tons over 30 years.

The proposed regulations would touch the lives of any American who shops at the supermarket, buys a bottled drink at a convenience store or picks up a prepared sandwich at a delicatessen. That's close to ... everybody.

The proposed rules relate to the huge restaurant-sized refrigeration units and big coolers where you find milk or frozen foods at the supermarket. These units gobble down tremendous amounts of electricity, so the proposed rules require manufacturers to make these appliances run on less power.

"The energy saved from these proposed rules would be equal to the amount of electricity used by 50 million homes in a year," said Heather Zichal, deputy assistant to the president for energy and climate change in a statement issued by the White House.

The newly proposed refrigeration standards expand on stronger efficiency requirements for home appliances, which took effect about two years ago.

In a speech August 27, Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz said the increased standards will yield important results in the overall goal to lower carbon emissions and slow the forces of climate change. "The cumulative impact [of individual regulations] is considerable, which is exactly

why we need to stay on this course of technology-grounded efficiency rules for a whole range of appliances," Moniz said speaking at the Columbia University Center on Global Energy Policy.

The Department of Energy issued the proposed rule for commercial refrigeration units. The proposal now undergoes a legally required period for appliance manufacturers and the public to comment on it. That period lasts until January 2014, and then the federal agency will consider the comments and issue a final version of the rule at a later date.

In its efforts to shift the nation toward a low-carbon economy, the Obama administration is also taking steps to promote progress and research in renewable energy technologies. The Energy Department has been nudging solar and wind technologies along, but August 29 it announced \$16 million investment in projects focused on energy generation from the movement of waves, tides and currents – also known as marine and hydrokinetic technology (MKT).

That sum is distributed among 17 different projects that will help U.S. companies build durable, efficient wave and tidal energy capture and generation devices. This federal support will also help the emerging industry develop new software to predict ocean conditions and adjust equipment operations to optimize power production.

The administration is committed to developing renewable energy sources responsibly, so the package of MKT grants also supports research to gather and analyze environmental data from wave and tidal projects. Some of the grantees – a mix of commercial, academic and scientific organizations – will also study how marine life might be affected by the underwater activity.

A 2012 report from the Department of Energy's Water Power Program estimates that U.S. tidal and marine power has the potential to generate energy equivalent to more than half of current annual national power use. The report describes MKT as a "renewable, emissions-free resource to generate environmentally sustainable and cost-effective electricity."

Ocean Renewable Power Company (ORPC) is a U.S. pioneer in this form of renewable energy, becoming the first company in North America to connect tidal generators to the electric grid. The company, located in the northeast state of Maine, is a recipient of two Energy Department grants. One project will help the company develop and test better generator components. The second project will study the compatibility of marine life and MKT technology.

ORPC's first generator was lowered to the ocean floor in Cobscook Bay, Maine, in August 2012. A company spokesman said the machine has been transforming the movement of the tides into electricity for most of the past year, removed from its seabed locale only for maintenance.

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