

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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More than 60 Countries to Attend U.S. Investment Summit

12 September 2013

Washington – U.S. Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker announced September 12 that businesses, investors and government entities from more than 60 countries will participate in the SelectUSA 2013 Investment Summit October 31–November 1 in Washington.

Every region of the world will be represented at this first-of-its-kind event, the Commerce Department said in a news release.

The two-day event will connect investors with local, state and regional economic development organizations.

“We are delighted that more than 60 countries will be represented at the SelectUSA Summit in Washington, D.C., where they will have the opportunity to learn why the United States is the premier investment location,” Pritzker said.

“This broad interest in the summit is a testament to the interest of companies, investors and government entities in doing businesses here in America. We’re planning a very productive agenda for summit participants to discuss investment opportunities, network and learn about the U.S. investment climate and available resources.”

The Department of Commerce recently announced that four members of President Obama’s Cabinet will be participating: Secretary of Commerce Pritzker, Secretary of State John Kerry, Secretary of the Treasury Jack Lew and U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman. Also in the speaker lineup are the chief executive officers of BlackRock, Bloomberg L.P., Caterpillar Inc., Dow Chemical Company, Siemens Corporation and Wal-Mart U.S.

To date, economic development organizations in 42 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico will be participating in the summit. As an integral part of the summit, they will be prepared to discuss their investment attraction strategies with potential investors.

“Foreign investment in the United States is a win for American jobs and a win for those who invest here,” said Secretary Kerry. “We offer the world’s best infrastructure and the world’s leading workforce to investors who want access to the world’s most attractive and stable market for high-quality goods and services.”

Young U.S. Adults Bring New World View to National Problems

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 12 September 2013

Washington – Americans born between 1979 and 1994 are “dramatically different” from generations before them. After more than a decade of study, a prominent U.S. pollster calls this generation the “first globals” because his research reveals that they see and experience the world in such a new way.

First Globals: Understanding, Managing & Unleashing the Potential of Our Millennial Generation by John Zogby and Joan Snyder Kuhl was published in June.

A veteran pollster, John Zogby has spent more than a decade studying the views of this generation of 72 million as reflected in numerous polls conducted over more than a decade. He detected consistent and pronounced tendencies for this generation to express opinions reflecting a larger vision of the world than their elders have had.

One notable difference, Zogby says, is that two-thirds of the people in this age group have passports and have traveled abroad. “Thirty-five percent say that they expect – not hope, or wish – they expect to live and work in a foreign capital at some point in their lives.”

In a related view, Zogby says surveys have found that more than 60 percent of the millennial generation say that fluency in a foreign language is very or somewhat important. Only 3 percent to 5 percent of people in other age groups express that view, the pollster said.

Workplace and economic trends of recent decades have created an accepted wisdom that the generation now in early adulthood will not have the stable careers that their grandparents had. They won’t remain employed by the same company throughout their adult lives, but rather will undergo multiple career shifts.

“There’s a sense of having to be flexible, nimble and mobile in their lives,” Zogby said at a September 10 Washington briefing, “which makes their attitudes and values and behavior patterns so different.”

Zogby suggests these attitudes among the “first globals” emerge from their experiences growing up in a rapidly globalizing world, influenced by international marketing, fashion and entertainment trends.

“They grew up in a world where many different peoples were wearing what they were wearing and sharing what they were sharing,” Zogby said. They have not come to maturity with the belief that people outside their own community, culture or country are to be feared, distrusted

or hated. That perception has a profound effect on the views the group will have about the foreign policy decisions their leaders will make.

“This is a group that is the least likely of any age cohort to favor war,” Zogby said, “because whoever the opposite side is, they are no longer ‘The Other.’”

History provides many examples of populations that have been led into war with the belief that “The Other” is subhuman or alien, he said.

Zogby’s research leads him to the belief that members of the millennial generation appreciate the United States, but are not inclined to put their homeland on a level above other nations. “They have a greater appreciation than any other group – and that is growing – of other cultures.”

Another foreign policy viewpoint that these young adults will adopt, the pollster predicts, is support for U.S. engagement in foreign alliances, international partnerships and the United Nations.

As they become the dominant decisionmakers in the future, Zogby foresees this age group making significant changes in U.S. society, bringing a “crowd-sourcing methodology” to problem solving on a national scale.

“I, for one, am very optimistic about our millennials,” Zogby said. He predicts that young adults will be able to bring fresh solutions and new skills to social problems that defied solution within the context of 20th century political alignment, on both a national and global scale.

“This is a group that is very much inculcated in environmental values” from their earliest education, Zogby said. Many call themselves “citizens of Planet Earth,” he said, and bear a sense of global responsibility.

President Obama Encourages Effort to Control Syrian Chemical Weapons

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

Washington – President Obama said U.S. support for a diplomatic resolution of the crisis in Syria, sparked by the use of poison nerve gas to kill 1,429 civilians, is based on a rapidly developing international effort to take control of the Syrian regime’s sizable stockpile of lethal chemical weapons.

In the past few days there have been encouraging signs, in part because of the use of a credible threat of U.S. military action, that the regime of Bashar al-Assad is willing to give up its chemical weapons to the international community under the control of the United Nations, Obama said in a nationally televised address to

the American people September 10.

The Assad regime has also indicated that it is willing to join the international Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits their use, the president added.

“It’s too early to tell whether this offer will succeed, and any agreement must verify that the Assad regime keeps its commitments,” Obama said. “But this initiative has the potential to remove the threat of chemical weapons without the use of force.”

Speaking from the East Room of the White House, Obama told the national audience that he has asked the U.S. Congress to delay a vote to authorize the use of a limited U.S. military response while Secretary of State John Kerry and American diplomats pursue diplomacy.

Kerry is headed to Geneva on September 11 to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, while the president continues talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and representatives of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council meet in a special session on September 11. Russia is a close ally of Syria.

“If we fail to act, the Assad regime will see no reason to stop using chemical weapons. As the ban against these weapons erodes, other tyrants will have no reason to think twice about acquiring poison gas,” the president said.

The crisis was caused August 21 when Syrian military forces attacked 11 Damascus neighborhoods with chemical artillery and mortar weapons, killing 1,429 Syrian civilians, including 426 children.

“The world saw in gruesome detail the terrible nature of chemical weapons, and why the overwhelming majority of humanity has declared them off-limits – a crime against humanity, and a violation of the laws of war,” Obama 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; Syria remains one of four nations that have not signed or ratified the treaty. Syria has the largest chemical weapons stockpile in the Middle East – including mustard gas, sarin and VX – and thousands of munitions to deliver chemical agents.

According to the United Nations, more than 100,000 people have been killed in the ongoing Syrian civil war, which began in March 2011.

Development Needs Students' Ideas, USAID's Shah Says

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 11 September 2013

Washington — Students' ideas for solutions are needed to help meet the world's development challenges, says the head of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Rajiv Shah.

Shah also said that university faculty, nonprofits, governments, scientists, businesses and entrepreneurs are other sources of ideas "that can transform the world." "We all play a role," he told students at the University of Arkansas September 9.

Shah noted that the university, in Fayetteville, Arkansas, has a history of agricultural research. In 1951, it was the first U.S. land grant institution to send scientists and students to work in agriculture in a developing country. In Panama, they helped develop the country's farm extension and research programs, created methods for storing fragile seeds in humid climates and introduced new farming tools, such as plows.

"Decades later we use that basic model of American partnership based on science, technology and respect for local conditions and an understanding of local partners to transform the face of hunger, poverty, growth and opportunity in many parts of the world," Shah said.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

Earlier in the day, Shah and the chief executive officer of Wal-Mart Stores Inc. agreed to apply the company's business capabilities to help get food from farm to table and help small-scale farmers move out of poverty in countries where USAID works.

"If we can help make sure that perishable crops make it to market without being wasted or spoiled or lost in supply chains even when rains make roads seemingly impassable ... then we're helping improve rural incomes for families," Shah said.

The USAID chief added that Wal-Mart's expertise in logistics will extend to the delivery of humanitarian aid from the agency's emergency distribution centers located around the world and of lifesaving medicines and vaccines to rural clinics.

"We're going to rely on Wal-Mart's ingenuity and knowledge of faster, cheaper, safer supply chains and logistics management to help improve the efficiency of that enterprise," he said.

FEED THE FUTURE

Shah leads the Feed the Future program, the U.S. global hunger and food security initiative that focuses on 19

countries that have committed to expand their investments in agriculture, to reform their regulations so businesses can thrive and to fight corruption. "When countries do that, the United States will make significant investments [in the countries]," Shah said.

STUDENT INNOVATION

Continuing on the theme of innovation, Shah told the students that while in Africa with President Obama in June, he saw a demonstration of a soccer ball lookalike called a "socket ball." When kicked around for about 30 minutes, the ball, invented by two students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, can power a mobile device for up to eight hours, he said.

"Those are the new inventions, technologies that can be the next phase of university and student partnerships with the biggest development challenges around the world," he said.

Officials Map Next Steps in U.S.-Chinese Military Relations

11 September 2013

This article was originally published on the Defense Department website on September 10.

Washington — U.S. and Chinese officials mapped the next steps in the military-to-military relationship between their nations at the 14th annual defense consultative talks that ended in Beijing on September 9.

James N. Miller, the undersecretary of defense for policy, met with Lieutenant General Wang Guanzhong, deputy chief of the People's Liberation Army General Staff. The two men last met in July.

"We're engaging the Chinese in a number of channels ... and we are working to build cooperation in areas of mutual interest," Miller told reporters following the meeting. "We're also discussing our differences and working to narrow them where we can. Where we can't narrow the differences, at least we can understand each other's perspectives better, and we're working to reduce the chances of misunderstanding and miscalculations."

The United States and China are the world's two largest economies. The consultative talks on defense "looked for ways to build strategic trust and look for opportunities to build on cooperation in areas of mutual interest," Miller said. This includes humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping and maritime safety, to name just a few, he added.

The talks sought to capitalize on recent cooperation. Last month, Chinese and U.S. forces completed a counterpiracy exercise in the Gulf of Aden, Miller noted,

and China already has announced it will participate in the RIMPAC 2014 exercise in the Pacific Rim. The U.S. and Chinese teams also discussed the Chinese participating in other exercises, including multinational exercises such as Cobra Gold 2014, he said.

The talks covered maritime security in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, and the two sides exchanged views on cyber, space, nuclear policy and missile defense, Miller said.

"I emphasized our grave concerns reference North Korea's nuclear and missile developments," the undersecretary said. "We called on China to pressure North Korea to return to a process of credible and authentic negotiations aimed at denuclearization."

U.S. Disease Scientist Cites Three Threats to Global Health

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 11 September 2013

Washington — Three major vulnerabilities threaten people's health worldwide, said the director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the agency is working around the clock to decrease the threats.

Dr. Thomas Frieden outlined his concerns in a Washington speech September 10, characterizing them as "the three coughs" that might be heard around the world.

The first cough is emerging diseases. They are a twofold threat, Frieden said, because medical professionals never have seen them before and humans, never exposed to them, have no natural immunity. He cited Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), first identified just last year; the H7N9 avian influenza flu strain; and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which swept the world in 2003.

Since that time, Chinese health authorities have acknowledged that they could have done more to better control SARS as it emerged. The international community has taken great strides in ensuing years to prevent a similar far-reaching outbreak. SARS sickened more than 8,000 people and killed almost 800 in 26 countries within a matter of months.

Frieden said the world has had 10 years of building trust among international health agencies and 10 years of improving skills in the face of unknown disease. That investment proved its worth in early 2013 when the H7N9 flu strain emerged in China.

"From the first hours after they identified the organism, [Chinese health authorities] have been absolutely transparent," Frieden said. "They have posted that

organism's genome onto the Internet."

That action — wide distribution of the genetic profile of the disease-causing organism — allowed better diagnoses for patients who showed up in clinics anywhere with symptoms unfamiliar to health care professionals.

"The second cough is the cough of drug-resistant tuberculosis," Frieden told his audience at the National Press Club. "We are all connected by the air we breathe." Frieden spent some early years working in a TB clinic.

Today, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 75 countries worldwide have reported at least one case of extremely drug resistant TB (XDR-TB). With fewer than 700,000 cases identified worldwide, it is still considered rare, but it is very difficult to treat because first-line medications are ineffective. Other drugs with some degree of effectiveness against XDR-TB are scarce and expensive.

Frieden also warned about the appearance of other microbes that are developing a high level of resistance to medications that were once very effective. Such organisms are a mounting risk, especially in hospitals and group homes for elderly people or others with already damaged immune systems.

An opportunity to stop these organisms still exists, Frieden said, but doing so will require extensive collaboration within the U.S. health care system and with others around the world.

The third looming threat to world health that worries Frieden is highly infectious microbes that could be developed and deployed as bioweapons.

In the face of these threats, Frieden said, the global health community must work together to "find, stop and prevent" these potential outbreaks. Rapidly and properly identifying emerging diseases is a critical step, the CDC director said.

"A blind spot anywhere in the world, it's a risk to us everywhere in the world," Frieden said. The medical capability to detect emerging organisms has advanced rapidly in recent years, but the science must be pushed still further. Epidemiologists must become more successful, Frieden said, at spotting disease-causing organisms, discovering their properties and developing treatments and cures.

The CDC is working to get more trained "disease detectives" deployed, Frieden said. "We've done that not only in this country, but in more than 40 countries around the world where we've trained about 3,000 of them." These three major threats to global health demand

attention, but the CDC director said an “unfinished agenda” remains in public health activity. Enormous advancements have been made in increasing populations of children who are vaccinated against common diseases worldwide, but more must be done, he said.

Measles is returning as a childhood health threat because of complacency about vaccination. The highly infectious nature of this particular disease demands ongoing vigilance, Frieden said.

The United States helps to promote stability and advance economic development in the world by supporting public health improvements globally. But a moral imperative is also involved, he said, recalling a meeting with a Nigerian mother holding twin infants.

“She said to me, ‘I’m HIV-positive, but my babies are HIV-negative because of PEPFAR [the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief],’” Frieden recalled. The 10-year-old U.S. program has saved the lives of 5.5 million people by getting antiretroviral medication to people living with AIDS around the world.

U.S. Gets Tough on Wildlife Trafficking

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 10 September 2013

Washington – The United States is mobilizing an intensified campaign to stop wildlife trafficking of species threatened by illegal hunting in many regions of the world.

U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell announced the membership of a new federal council September 9 that will better coordinate domestic and international efforts to apprehend and prosecute this criminal activity.

Jewel says illegal hunting and trafficking in wildlife have reached crisis levels among certain species, naming elephants, rhinos, great apes, tigers, sharks, tuna and turtles.

The new advisory council will help direct heightened efforts to protect these creatures. “We will continue to work in partnership with countries where these animals live and roam and other nations,” Jewell said, “to shut down the illegal trade in wildlife products and to bring poachers and traffickers to justice.”

Representatives of nongovernmental conservation organizations make up about half the council’s membership, including the Wildlife Conservation Society’s president and chief executive, Cristián Samper.

“African elephants alone are being lost at an unprecedented rate, and the demand for ivory shows no decline,” Samper said in a Wildlife Conservation Society

press release. “Approximately 35,000 elephants were killed by poachers last year – some 96 animals each day.”

As part of the effort, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is increasing its training of game officers, customs officials and police across Africa, Latin America and Asia. U.S. agencies, in partnership with concerned nonprofit organizations, will also be providing equipment and technical support to increase the capability of range countries to combat trafficking and poaching within their borders.

Participants in the new drive to protect diminishing species gathered at a White House event September 9. Fish and Wildlife Service director Daniel Ashe said the United States must be part of the solution to this problem, even though the illegal hunting of these animals goes on far away.

“The species and habitats of our planet support billions of people and drive the world’s economy,” Ashe said. “We all have a stake in ensuring their survival.”

Ashe said U.S. markets and consumers are part of the supply chain for these illegal products, which can end up in U.S. shops or pass through U.S. ports.

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT PROSECUTES CASES

The U.S. Department of Justice is also a player in this heightened campaign against wildlife trafficking. The department issued a September 9 fact sheet detailing some of the cases it has prosecuted in the United States. “Operation Crash” is an ongoing effort to shut down the illegal slaughter of rhinoceros and the trafficking of their horns.

For example, the Justice Department prosecuted a California case involving trafficking in rhinoceros horn and associated charges of conspiracy, smuggling, money laundering and tax fraud. The defendants pleaded guilty and will serve sentences up to three and a half years and pay more than \$100,000 in fines and back taxes.

The Justice Department is also helping law enforcement agencies trying to combat this problem in other nations, helping to train investigators, prosecutors and judges, “resulting in more proactive international law enforcement operations,” according to the fact sheet.

In another case, a Puerto Rican company, GEM Manufacturing LLC, pleaded guilty after U.S. investigators found the company was involved in the illegal import of rare, protected black coral for use in jewelry and decorative objects. The company agreed to pay a criminal fine of \$1.8 million and make community service payments of \$500,000. GEM also forfeited more than \$1 million in products.

The anti-trafficking campaign stems from an executive order signed by President Obama in July. It created the special council to direct the campaign. The council includes the secretaries of state and the interior and the attorney general.

Nordic Nations, U.S. at Defining Moment

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

Washington — President Obama and the leaders of five Nordic nations acknowledged after a dinner at Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt's Sager House residence that they have reached a defining moment in their strategically crucial trans-Atlantic relationship.

The Nordic leaders say they share a fundamental commitment with the United States to democracy, human rights, respect for the rule of law, and economic freedom in a time of unpredictable challenges. They also stressed their commitment to global economic development, environmental stewardship and protection of the Arctic region.

"We continue to deepen our collaboration on important shared priorities, including climate change and clean energy, the Arctic, a strong, open multilateral trading system, emerging security challenges, global development and humanitarian assistance, and Europe's regional economic and security environment," the leaders said in a September 4 joint statement.

Earlier, Obama praised Sweden and the other Nordic nations for their strong support for democracy and development while strengthening democratic governance in Eastern Europe; supporting global efforts against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria; and promoting responsible development in Africa.

Obama, whose trip was the first by a sitting U.S. president to Stockholm, expressed his gratitude to Reinfeldt for hosting the meeting, which included Finnish President Sauli Niinistö, Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg and Icelandic Prime Minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson.

"This evening, we have come together at a defining moment in the trans-Atlantic relationship to discuss our long-term goals ... and agree to take concrete steps to achieve those goals," the leaders said.

Obama met separately with Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė and Latvian President Andris Bērziņš, echoing their meeting August 30 at the White House, for consultations on many of the same issues that dominated the Sager

House talks.

All of these nations are members or observers of the Nordic Council. It was formed in 1952 and includes 87 elected members from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands. The three Baltic States sit on the council in observer status.

In their joint statement, the Nordic and U.S. leaders acknowledged the importance of cooperation in building comprehensive security and addressing issues that include terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illicit international arms trade and threats to cybersecurity. They agreed to strengthen their commitment to regional, trans-Atlantic and international security forums such as the European Union and NATO.

They emphasized the shared goal of a "stable and peaceful Middle East." They agreed on the need for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between the Israelis and Palestinians.

The leaders also condemned any use of chemical weapons in the civil strife in Syria.

"We are convinced a strong international reaction is required," the six nations said, adding that "those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable."

The six nations agreed to launch a U.S.-Nordic Security Dialogue to meet annually and discuss opportunities for collaboration on security. They will focus on issues arising through the United Nations and use an integrated approach to preventive diplomacy, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and preventing atrocities.

Shifting from security to economic growth, the six nations recognized the importance of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, known informally as T-TIP, which is being negotiated between the European Union and the United States.

The sweeping trade agreement aims to boost economic growth in the United States and EU and add to the more than 13 million American and EU jobs already supported by trans-Atlantic trade and investment. The leaders also agreed to bolster trade and investment between the United States, Norway and Iceland.

The Nordic leaders agreed to partner on issues related to climate change and the Arctic, saying that climate change is one of the foremost challenges for their future economic growth and well-being. "We underscore the importance of continuing to encourage innovative approaches to promoting energy efficiency and clean energy, including

renewables, and taking action on climate change," they said.

U.S. Exposes Iranian Attempts to Evade Oil Sanctions

09 September 2013

Washington – The U.S. Treasury Department has identified a network of six individuals and four businesses as subject to sanctions for attempting to evade oil sanctions placed on Iran's government.

The actions, announced in a September 6 news release, are part of ongoing U.S. efforts to prevent sanctions evasion by individuals and companies acting on behalf of the Iranian government.

"Our sanctions on Iran's oil sales are a critically important component of maintaining pressure on the Iranian government, and we will not allow Iran to relieve that pressure through evasion and circumvention," said Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen. "We will continue to target those individuals and entities that devise schemes to evade our sanctions."

Iran's government relies on front companies, financial institutions and businessmen willing to engage in deceptive transactions to conceal the direct involvement of the government and its instrumentalities, such as the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and the Naftiran Intertrade Company (NICO) Sarl.

The latest action targets the network of Seyed Seyyedi, an Iranian businessman and the director of Sima General Trading, an entity previously sanctioned by the Treasury Department; a network of companies based in the United Arab Emirates that Seyyedi controls; and representatives of NIOC and NICO based in the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

Seyed Seyyedi was identified for acting on behalf of various Iranian government entities and front companies, including NIOC and NICO, as well as Sima General Trading. The Treasury Department previously identified Sima General Trading in March 2013 for its role in the sanctions-evasion scheme being carried out by the Greek businessman Dimitris Cambis.

Seyyedi's Sima General Trading helped finance a Cambis front company to purchase oil tankers while disguising the fact that the tankers were being purchased on behalf of the National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC). Cambis' front companies were used to deceive the international business community by obscuring the Iranian ownership of ships capable of carrying roughly \$200 million worth of oil per shipment.

The Treasury Department also identified the U.A.E.-based

KASB International LLC, Petro Royal FZE and AA Energy FZCO, each of which is controlled by Seyyedi and used to assist NICO and NICO front companies, such as Sima General Trading, in its sanctions-evasion schemes.

In addition to Seyed Seyyedi, the Treasury Department identified several other persons and entities for their links to Iran's operations to evade oil sanctions:

- Swiss Management Services Sarl is a Swiss company controlled by NICO Sarl and used by NICO to continue its operations on behalf of Iran following multiple U.S. sanctions actions targeting NICO and NICO Sarl. Mohammad Moinie is Switzerland-based NICO Sarl's commercial director.

- Reza Parsaei is a director for NIOC International Affairs (London) Ltd., which was identified as an Iranian government entity in July 2010. Parsaei has involved himself in a scheme to deceptively import Iranian oil into the European Union. Parsaei also coordinates closely with another director for NIOC International Affairs (London) Ltd., Seyed Mohamad Ali Khatibi Tabatabaei. Seyed Mohaddes and Mohammed Ziracchian Zadeh act as directors of the Iranian Oil Company (U.K.) Ltd., which was also identified as an Iranian government entity in July 2010.

Each of the individuals and companies sanctioned September 6 was identified under a U.S. executive order that blocks the property of Iran's government, including that of individuals and entities identified as acting on behalf of it. The order also generally prohibits transactions by U.S. persons or through the United States with any of these entities and blocks any U.S. assets they may have. Foreign persons and financial institutions that facilitate transactions for such persons or materially support them may also be exposed to sanctions.

Mississippi Meets Yangtze in U.S.-China Rivers Partnership

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 09 September 2013

Washington – Flowing through the heartland of the United States, the Mississippi River touches many sectors of American life – history, agriculture, industry and culture. China's Yangtze River holds similar influence over its land and people. Scientists who study these vast river basins on different continents are combining their knowledge to better understand how nations can best use vital waters to meet human needs and still sustain the rivers' natural resources.

Exploration and commercial use of the Upper Mississippi began in the United States' earliest years, so geographers have produced two centuries' worth of maps showing the changing course and levels of its waters stretching from

the state of Minnesota south to Illinois. Since a 1986 authorization from the U.S. Congress, scientists at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) have been systematically collecting detailed data about the vegetation, animal life and water quality of this 2,000-kilometer-long river system. The quantity of data, collected over a prolonged, continuous period, scientists say, exceeds that available on any other river system in the world.

“There’s no match around the world I have seen,” said USGS research ecologist Yao Yin, who is a member of the scientific team involved in Mississippi River data collection conducted under the Long Term Resource Monitoring Program. This research effort is an element of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Upper Mississippi River Restoration–Environmental Management Program.

Yin is also the USGS scientist assigned to The Nature Conservancy’s Great Rivers Partnership (GRP), an effort to share knowledge and best practices with scientists and resource managers working on China’s Yangtze River and other rivers.

“There have been many exchanges back and forth and they’ve been extremely successful,” said Michael Reuter, the director of the GRP, which the conservancy founded in 2005 with a lead gift from the Caterpillar Foundation and support from other partners.

Collecting data systematically, comparing variations in the data over time, and understanding how and why changes have occurred are among the skills the U.S. scientists have been able to share with Chinese counterparts.

USGS fish and wildlife biologist Ken Lubinski said, “The exchange is intended to help people ‘work the problem,’ as my colleague Brian says,” quoting Brian Ickes, a USGS fisheries biologist participating in the exchange. “People are trying to fix something and need objective science to make decisions.”

On one visit to China, Yao Yin said, U.S. scientists raised questions about the accuracy of a method Yangtze researchers were using to estimate fish populations. On a return visit to the United States, the Chinese scientists saw the Mississippi method of fish counts and “quickly realized,” he said, that it could improve the accuracy of their data.

Excessive algal blooms in both the Yangtze and the Mississippi are a common problem that the U.S. and Chinese scientists would like to fix. Caused by excessive nutrient flow into the waters, algal blooms are a nuisance in many large river systems and even a health hazard to humans who use them. Lubinski said scientists on both sides of the exchange are working to better understand

algal blooms.

Both Yin and Lubinski talked about the Yangtze partnership from their offices at USGS’ Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center.

In a separate interview, GRP’s Reuter said the exchange of methods, ideas and observations is the objective of the partnership to “connect knowledge held by various organizations to help make better decisions for large river systems around the world.”

The Mississippi-Yangtze partnership began in 2006 and evolved in 2012 to become an official U.S.-China EcoPartnership between the Conservancy’s GRP and China’s Yangtze River Basin Fishery Resource Management Committee. This enhanced relationship will lead to greater levels of cooperation among the two bodies for ecosystem protection, fisheries monitoring, resource surveys, fisheries policies, sustainable agriculture and invasive species management, according to the Nature Conservancy.

While sustaining the partnership with Chinese resource managers, Reuter said, the GRP is also reaching out to other major world river systems in South America, Africa and Southeast Asia to establish similar knowledge exchanges.

Lubinski neatly sums up the results to emerge from these partnerships: “We get smarter faster by talking to our colleagues on other river systems.”

Still he and Yin say their partnership with Yangtze scientists and river managers goes beyond the science. The time they share working side by side with the same goals gives rise to trust, mutual respect and understanding.

Lubinski tells a story about hosting a dinner for visiting Chinese scientists one evening at his cabin near the Mississippi River, with entertainment by regional musicians who play the songs heard on the river since the 19th century. It was a night they “rolled up the rugs,” Lubinski said, so Americans and Chinese could dance to the rhythms that have pulsed down the Mississippi for generations.

President Obama Praises Global Economic Progress over Last 5 Years

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer | 06 September 2013

Washington – President Obama praised the world’s recovery from the financial crisis that began in September five years ago and the U.S. recovery that is helping to drive renewed global growth.

"Instead of the looming threat of another financial meltdown, we're focused for the first time in many years on building upon the gains that we've made," Obama noted during a press briefing following the two-day G20 Summit in St. Petersburg, Russia.

"For the first time in three years, instead of an urgent discussion to address the European financial crisis, we see a Europe that has emerged from recession," he added.

Citing the strength of the U.S. recovery, the president said the U.S. manufacturing sector is rebounding, and new regulations have strengthened the banking system while reducing the chance of another crisis. The United States is also reducing its dependence on imported oil and is producing more clean energy.

In the last three and a half years, Obama said, the U.S. private sector has created 7.5 million new jobs, which is at a pace of more than 2 million jobs annually.

"We've put more people back to work, but we've also cleared away the rubble of crisis and laid the foundation for stronger and more durable economic growth," the president told journalists.

In tandem with employment progress, Obama said, the United States also is whittling down its federal deficit at the fastest rate in 60 years. The president emphasized he will keep making the case for smart investments and fiscal responsibility to keep the U.S. economy in a growth pattern, create more jobs and keep the U.S. business sector competitive in the global economy.

"I'm determined that the world has confidence in the full faith and credit of the United States," the president said. "As the world's largest economy, our recovery is helping to drive global growth."

"And in the emerging markets in particular, there's a recognition that a strong U.S. economy is good for their economies, too," he said.

Leaders at the summit, representing the 20 most advanced and largest global economies, agreed on specific steps to strengthen the global economy, address climate change, bolster the international tax system, expand trade, strengthen nuclear industry liability, improve workplace safety, combat corruption and promote global development, according to the White House.

In addition, the G20 leaders reached these agreements:

- To phase down the production and consumption of a potent category of greenhouse gases through the Montreal Protocol.

- To work together to address international tax evasion, to fix tax rules that allow multinational companies to avoid paying tax anywhere, and to support efforts by less developed countries to strengthen their revenue collection systems.

- To achieve a strong multilateral trade agreement in December 2013, with trade facilitation at its core, and to extend the standstill on protectionist trade measures for an additional two years through 2016.

"We're moving ahead with our development agenda, with a focus on issues like food security and combating corruption," Obama said.

During the summit, Obama said, the United States continued efforts to advance two key trade initiatives: the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

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