

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## Secretary Kerry Encourages Faith-Based Efforts for Middle East Peace

06 February 2014

*This blog post by Liora Danan was originally published on the State Department website on January 31. Danan serves in the State Department's Office of Faith Based Community Initiatives.*

### Secretary Kerry Encourages Faith-Based Efforts to Support Middle East Peace

By Liora Danan

"Humanity once shared an ark, why not again?"

With that question, Imam Yahya Hendi this week encouraged a room of senior Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders to consider their shared responsibility to support Middle East peace. He was joined in opening prayer by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who asked for a "blessing in a special way on John Kerry and all those who work together with him for their tireless efforts in seeking peace and harmony," and Rabbi Sharon Brous, who offered a prayer to "bless our leaders with continued dedication — despite opposition and cynicism — and bless us with a hunger for peace."

Those blessings set the tone for a small, off-the-record luncheon with Secretary of State John Kerry on January 28. The gathering, hosted by Georgetown University, was a rare opportunity for the secretary to meet with prominent American religious leaders to discuss one of his top foreign policy priorities; hear the leaders' perspectives and concerns; and encourage interfaith or other faith-based efforts to support peace in the region.

The event was coordinated with State Department's Office of the Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations, the White House Office of Public Engagement, and my office, the new Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives launched by Secretary Kerry last summer. Our involvement with the Georgetown event is a great example of the type of work this office hopes to continue, engaging religious leaders and communities in the foreign policy process, to help further conflict mitigation, human rights and development goals.

Following on the prayers of the three clergy, Secretary Kerry spoke, emphasizing the deep importance of shared Abrahamic values as a foundation for peace. He gave an update on current U.S. government efforts related to the negotiations, focusing on the temporary window of opportunity for making peace, and the leadership that both sides have demonstrated in taking courageous steps toward progress. The secretary said that he is pursuing a two-state solution now because the alternative is worse,

arguing that a one-state solution is not feasible conceptually or politically. He also underscored the ways in which the current approach is different than past efforts, and how a framework for negotiations would outline a concrete vision of what peace will look like and how each side can get there.

After a Q&A session with the secretary, the group continued its conversation with government officials leading this effort. The event participants quickly turned to practical ideas for follow-up action, including interfaith working group sessions with the State Department and focused interfaith delegations to the region. We welcome ideas from you as well.

### U.S. to Intensify Rebalancing in Asia in 2014

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 05 February 2014

Washington — The United States plans to intensify efforts to "rebalance" its policy in the Asia-Pacific region, according to Daniel Russel, the State Department's assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs.

During a February 4 briefing at the Washington Foreign Press Center, Russel said the United States is "dedicating more diplomatic resources, more public diplomacy resources, more assistance resources to advance our objectives in the region, and to do so in a way that's commensurate with the really comprehensive nature of our engagement."

This rebalancing effort, he said, covers the gamut of economic issues, security, environmental cooperation, strengthening alliances and active partnership with civil society and in democratic development. But special focus, he said, is on economic development, especially via mechanisms such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade pact. The Asia-Pacific region, he said, "continues to serve as an engine for global growth, with active and intense U.S. involvement."

Critical to economic development, he said, is unimpeded lawful commerce, respect for international law and peace on the high seas. Russel took note of China's unilateral attempt to declare an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea, which he said threatens to inhibit international lawful use of sea and airspace. "We want an inclusive region," he said. "We want a prosperous region. We want a region that respects international law. The maintenance of an open maritime regime based on the rule of law has been crucial to the development and the stability and the impressive economic growth of the region."

The United States, Russel said, as a global and Pacific power, has a huge stake in ensuring that the Asia-Pacific region remains open. The Obama administration, he said,

“has made clear that we urge China not to attempt to implement the ADIZ, and certainly not to replicate it in other sensitive areas, including and particularly in the South China Sea.”

“The United States,” Russel said, “along with many other countries in the region, has expressed concern by the reissuance or the promulgation by China of regulations, the so-called Hainan fishing regulations, that purport to levy requirements on other countries' operation and behavior.”

Territorial claims, he said, “must be made on the basis of international law, not simply as sweeping declarations of jurisdiction. ... No one can justifiably, in compliance with international law, simply assert the right to exercise control over great swaths of a sea.”

“But one thing is certain: None of these problems, none of these tensions can be solved by any one party alone,” Russel said. “There is a role for every country in contributing to a virtuous cycle of improved relations, and frankly, we look to each of our friends and partners in the Asia-Pacific region to make a contribution to good relations and to good neighborliness.”

Russel said U.S. commitment to stability and prosperity in the region is indicated by recent visits to the region by Vice President Biden and Deputy Secretary of State William Burns. In 2014, President Obama plans to visit the region, he said, along with Secretary of State John Kerry, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, and many other high-level U.S. officials.

“They will go to Asia because the Asia-Pacific region matters so much to the United States,” Russel said.

### **First Steps Made in Nuclear Scale-Back in Iran**

04 February 2014

Washington — A top U.S. official says a six-nation coalition eager to prevent the development of nuclear weapons in Iran has made notable progress on implementing the early stages of an agreement to achieve that end.

U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman appeared before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on February 4 to account for the implementation of the Joint Plan of Action forged between Iran and the P5+1 nations (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Germany) in November 2013.

Taking effect on January 20, the interim agreement is designed to do two things, Sherman told the panel. It stalls any further Iranian activity in the nuclear sector,

and it creates room for negotiations to continue in pursuit of a long-range agreement.

Iran has taken a number of steps to rein in progress and even roll back its nuclear program, Sherman said. The International Atomic Energy Agency has verified that Iran has stopped producing enriched uranium; disabled the centrifuge cascades that produce the volatile material; begun diluting the stockpile of enriched uranium; and stopped further development of nuclear facilities.

For its part, the United States is ready to begin to return Iranian funds that have been frozen in U.S. financial institutions for years. The interim agreement includes a promise to return more than \$4 billion, to be paid in installments.

Later in February, Sherman said, P5+1 negotiators will meet with Iran to continue their pursuit of a comprehensive solution. “Our goal for these negotiations is to reach a mutually agreed, long-term, comprehensive solution that would ensure Iran’s nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful,” she said.

The initial steps taken under the Joint Plan of Action create the platform to begin the talks that will ensure a peaceful nuclear program in Iran, Sherman said. Iran has agreed to address concerns raised in U.N. Security Council resolutions passed over the years emphasizing the importance of a peaceful nuclear program to avoid regional instability.

“In addition, Iran has committed to implement agreed transparency measures and enhanced monitoring,” Sherman said.

Some members of Congress have expressed concern over Iran’s good faith in these negotiations. Suggestions have even rumbled through the Capitol building about the possibility of imposing more sanctions, in sharp contrast to the Obama administration’s tactic to hold out looser sanctions as a reward.

By no means have negotiators dropped sanctions from the potential consequences if a comprehensive solution remains elusive, Sherman said. “If [Iran] fails to live up to its commitment, or if we are unable to reach agreement on a comprehensive solution, we would ask the Congress to ramp up new sanctions,” she said.

Sherman said more and tougher sanctions now could be very disruptive to the negotiation process and to the U.S. agreement with its allies.

Even in the hopeful glow of negotiations, the P5+1 nations have not lost sight of Iran’s destabilizing activities in the region and its human rights abuses, Sherman said.

## Secretary Kerry, Hagel Discuss Balance in U.S. Diplomacy and Defense

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer |  
03 February 2014

Washington – Secretary of State John Kerry and Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel told an international audience of efforts by the Obama administration to restore the balance between American diplomacy and defense as the United States moves away from a 13-year war footing.

“It’s clear to us, it’s clear to President Obama that our future requires a renewed and enhanced era of partnership with our friends and allies, especially here in Europe,” Hagel said at the 50th Munich Security Conference on February 1.

At the gathering of the world’s top diplomats and defense officials, Kerry said the trans-Atlantic community cannot retreat from the challenges and threats that arise across the globe. Kerry proposed that what is needed in 2014 is a trans-Atlantic renaissance, “a new burst of energy and commitment and investment in the three roots of our strength: our economic prosperity, our shared security and the common values that sustain us.”

At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January, Kerry told political, business and academic leaders that the United States was not withdrawing from the world or its responsibilities into some form of isolationism. He said the United States would be engaged more than ever, a theme echoed by President Obama.

Obama said in his recent State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress that “in a world of complex threats, our security and leadership depend on all the elements of our power – including strong and principled diplomacy.”

Kerry added that successful diplomacy depends on harnessing the power of strong alliances, such as NATO. The United States strongly believes that it is no longer possible for a single nation, acting on its own, to resolve sweeping issues such as Middle East peace, convincing nations to forgo development of nuclear arsenals, or ending the violent civil war in Syria, Kerry said.

“That’s why it’s so important that the United States and Europe stick together, that we continue to understand the importance of the strength of our unity and unity of action,” Kerry said.

“Our challenge today is to ensure opportunity, security and liberty for Americans and Europeans, but also for people all over the world who look to us for that possibility. Our challenge is to renew this partnership and to live up to the legacy of the world’s strongest alliance,”

Kerry said.

Kerry also remarked on the depth and breadth of Europe and the United States’ economic partnership over the last 60 years. He said the two economies can do more to harness the energy and the talents of their people through the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which “will promote trade, investment, innovation.”

In his remarks at the Munich Conference, Hagel said he and Kerry have worked closely to rebalance the relationship between diplomacy and defense.

Hagel noted that as changes, challenges and threats emerge, the world will grow more complicated, interconnected and in many cases more combustible.

“The challenges and choices before us will demand leadership that reaches into the future without stumbling over the present,” Hagel told the conference. “Meeting this challenge of change will not be easy, but we must do so and we must do so together.”

Hagel said the emerging strategy in U.S. defense investments makes it clear that Europe is regarded as an indispensable partner in addressing these threats and challenges, as well as new opportunities.

## International Space Agencies Push New Telescope Forward

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 03 February 2014

Washington – The next generation in space telescopes is reaching a crucial assembly stage at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland. Working toward a launch deadline of 2018, NASA, the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Canadian Space Agency are building the successor to the Hubble Space Telescope to peer into distant corners of the universe and better understand the evolution of the cosmos.

All of the components of the massive mirrors that will bring these images to humankind for the first time have been delivered to Goddard, along with instruments assembled elsewhere by partners and contractors. Passing this milestone marks “significant progress for this mission,” said NASA administrator Charles Bolden at a February 3 press briefing. The James Webb Space Telescope, named for an early NASA administrator, “will revolutionize our understanding of the universe,” Bolden said at the briefing, attended by representatives of the many agencies and companies involved in the work.

Deputy project manager and technical engineer Paul Geithner led a video tour of the space center “clean room” at Goddard where the instrument’s components are now gathered, awaiting final assembly and testing. Wearing a

sterile white jumpsuit to protect the instruments from particles and dust, Geithner described the near-infrared spectrograph, an instrument provided by ESA. This instrument will be able to examine the faint light emitted by distant space objects to analyze the chemical fingerprints left by the elements that make up the objects.

“We’ll be able to see what stars and galaxies are made of,” Geithner said, “and even perhaps detect the molecules that we know are associated with life in atmospheres around other planets orbiting other stars. It’s pretty exciting.”

Space observations of recent years have discovered an abundance of “exoplanets” around other stars. The next stage is to identify terrestrial-like planets that orbit stars in habitable zones where atmosphere and water may likely exist. Geithner looks forward to turning the Webb telescope’s mirrors to planets such as these to find the carbon or oxygen that might support life.

These capabilities make the new telescope the most sophisticated observational instrument ever launched. Senator Barbara Mikulski said, “Even 50 and 100 years from now, they will be writing books about” the discoveries that astronomers will make with the telescope, as they did with the earlier Hubble Telescope.

The Canadian Space Agency delivered its contribution in 2012. The fine guidance sensor will allow the Webb Telescope to point precisely so it can obtain high-quality images. About 1,000 people working on design and manufacture in 187 countries will contribute to the four main instruments on board by launch time, according to mission background documents.

A launcher built by the French company Arianespace will send the telescope into space from the European spaceport located near Kourou, French Guiana. Before the launch, the space partnership will continue to run tests and operational exercises to insure that the Webb Telescope is in top working form when sent into space in 2018. Its mission will be to examine the universe from the first glow of the Big Bang to the formation of galaxies, stars, planets and solar systems. The information it gathers will be available to astronomers all over the world.

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