

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
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1. [Middle East Looking for Leadership and Reform, Clinton Says](#) (01-13-2011)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The people and leaders of the Middle East must work together to build a stronger foundation for their region, which is demanding economic and political reform, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told political, business and civil society leaders in Doha, Qatar.

Speaking January 13 at the seventh Forum for the Future, Clinton said the people of the Middle East “are looking for real leadership in the 21st century, and I think it can be provided, and I know that this is the moment to do so.”

Through vision, strategy and commitment, “you can help build a future that your young people will believe in, stay for, and defend,” she said. “It is time to see civil society not as a threat, but as a partner. And it is time for the elites in every society to invest in the futures of their own countries.”

January 13, 2011

Founded in 2004, Forum for the Future is an initiative between the countries of the Middle East and North Africa and the Group of 8 major industrialized economies. It provides an opportunity for officials from government, civil society and the private sector to discuss political and economic reforms aimed at promoting greater freedom, democracy and economic growth in the region.

With a growing majority of people under the age of 30, Clinton said that across the region “one in five young people is unemployed,” and in some places “the percentage is far more.”

Recalling her discussions with leaders and average citizens alike, Clinton said that while the people of the region are deeply proud of what the Middle East has accomplished, they are also concerned about the future.

“While some countries have made great strides in governance, in many others, people have grown tired of corrupt institutions and a stagnant political order. They are demanding reform to make their governments more effective, more responsive and more open. And all this is taking place against a backdrop of depleting resources: Water tables are dropping, oil reserves are running out and too few countries have adopted long-term plans for addressing these problems,” she said.

The region is in need of “firmer ground,” Clinton said. “I believe that the leaders of this region, in partnership with their people, have the capacity to build that stronger foundation,” by drawing on positive examples and models already at work in the Middle East to create jobs, improve education, make political reforms, and foster a greater respect for diversity.

She praised innovations, grass-roots-level economic and educational programs, and development projects she had seen during her current trip, which has taken her to the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Oman, as well as Qatar.

“I am here to pledge my country’s support for those who step up to solve the problems that we and you face,” she said. The United States wants to build stronger partnerships with those who are working to bring long-term stability and progress, and knows that “what happens in this region will have implications far beyond.”

Those who oppose reforms or cling to the status quo may be able temporarily to “hold back the full impact of their countries’ problems.” But Clinton warned that if leaders fail to offer meaningful opportunities for their young people and do not present a positive vision, people such as violent extremists and others who would “prey on desperation and poverty” will instead “fill the vacuum.”

The rising generation of Middle Eastern youth “has the potential to achieve so much,” and “we need to give them the chance to do so,” the secretary said.

“What we need is a real vision for that future that comes from each of you, from governments that must deliver on their promises, from civil society and business leaders who must build their people up, and of course, from the people themselves,” Clinton said.

2. Biden, Pakistani Prime Minister Hold Talks on Partnership (01-13-2011)

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — Vice President Biden says he held “extremely useful” discussions in Islamabad with Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani on “combating terror, issues of regional stability and promoting reconciliation and peace in Afghanistan.”

The two held a joint news conference in Islamabad after meeting January 12. Biden expressed “deepest condolences” over the assassination of Punjab Provincial Governor Salman Taseer on January 4, saying “there is no justification, none, for such senseless acts.”

“As we’ve seen throughout history, societies that tolerate such actions end up being consumed by those actions,” he said.

Biden and Gilani spoke of the “enduring partnership” between the United States and Pakistan, one that Biden said is “based on our common interests and our mutual respect for one another.” He added the U.S. remains committed to partnering with Pakistan to counter violent extremists “who violate Pakistan’s sovereignty and corrupt its good name.” He emphasized the shared U.S.-Pakistan belief that “violent extremists are a threat not just to the United States, but to Pakistan as well, and indeed to the entire civilized world,” and said the two countries stood united to combat “extreme ideologies.”

Biden reiterated America’s respect for religious diversity and freedom of religion, and he spoke about the deep tradition of Islam in the United States, challenging those who question the U.S. commitment to religious freedom to “name any other country in the world, any country in the world, where those of all faiths enjoy greater freedom of worship than they do in the United States of America.”

He added, “We are not the enemies of Islam, and we embrace those who practice that great religion in our country.”

Gilani and Biden commended the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, which Biden said will benefit the people of Pakistan in areas such as energy, agriculture and communications.

“This means that you will soon see more dams providing more electricity and irrigation; crop yields that are higher; more hospitals providing services to the people of Pakistan, among other tangible benefits,” he said.

As another example of the sustained U.S.-Pakistan partnership, the vice president noted the United States has established the [largest Fulbright program in the world in Pakistan](#), calling it “a long-term investment in the dynamism” of young Pakistanis.

Additionally, he said the two countries have partnered recently through increased security cooperation and [combined efforts to recover from Pakistan’s devastating floods](#) in July 2010. The United States has committed nearly \$600 million to flood recovery efforts and announced a new \$190 million contribution for flood-affected families January 6. The new commitment is funded through the Kerry-Lugar-Berman legislation with which the U.S. Congress authorized \$7.5 billion in assistance projects for Pakistan.

Biden said a close partnership with Pakistan is vital to U.S. interests, and called on leaders of both countries to build on progress made in 2010 by rededicating to “what still must be achieved together.”

“We want what you want: a strong, stable, prosperous, democratic Pakistan at peace with itself and with its neighbors, including India. We want that not just for your sake, but we wish your success because it’s in our own interest. It’s in the interest of the entire region, and I would argue the entire world,” Biden said.

3. Fact Sheet: U.S.-Russia 123 Agreement on Nuclear Energy (01-12-2011)

U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesman

The Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation for Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

(The U.S.-Russia 123 Agreement)

U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Beyrle and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov today exchanged diplomatic notes to bring into force the Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation for Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, referred to as the U.S.-Russia 123 Agreement.

The agreement offers significant benefits to the United States: a solid foundation for long-term U.S.-Russia civil nuclear cooperation; commercial opportunities for U.S. industry; and enhanced cooperation on important global nonproliferation goals.

The commitment to bringing the 123 Agreement into force was highlighted in the July 6, 2009 Joint Statement on Nuclear Cooperation issued by Presidents Obama and Medvedev. This agreement provides the basis for joint efforts on innovative nuclear energy systems and technologies, reliable nuclear fuel cycle services, joint ventures in third countries, and other types of cooperation.

The 123 Agreement is based on a mutual commitment to nuclear nonproliferation. Over the last 12 months, the United States and Russia have made significant accomplishments in this area, including:

- The signing and U.S. Senate ratification of an historic New START Treaty that significantly reduces the number of strategic nuclear weapons both countries may deploy;
- The signing of a protocol to amend the 2000 Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement, under which both countries will dispose of approximately 17,000 nuclear weapons-worth of excess weapon-grade plutonium; and,
- The establishment of both a Russian international nuclear fuel bank and an IAEA fuel bank that provide incentives for other nations not to acquire sensitive uranium enrichment technology.

Russia has also shut down its last remaining weapon-grade plutonium production reactor. Taken together, these are significant accomplishments made by both sides.

The U.S.-Russia 123 Agreement satisfies all applicable requirements of U.S. law for agreements of this type with a nuclear-weapon state, as defined by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It has a term of 30 years and permits the transfer of technology, material, equipment (including reactors), and components for nuclear research and nuclear power production.

The entry into force of the U.S.-Russia 123 Agreement will advance key nonproliferation and commercial goals:

- **Nuclear Nonproliferation Cooperation:** The 123 Agreement will create the conditions for improved cooperation on joint technology development to support arms control and nonproliferation activities. It will also provide the necessary legal framework for joint efforts to convert research reactors from highly-enriched uranium to low enriched uranium fuel. The 123 Agreement will aid cooperation on forensic analysis, allowing us to better identify nuclear material and prevent it from getting into the hands of terrorists, and it will set the stage for expanded joint technical cooperation on next generation international safeguards.
 - **Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation:** The 123 Agreement will facilitate cooperative work on reactor designs that result in reduced proliferation risk. It will create the conditions for advanced research and development projects that partner U.S. national laboratories and industry with Russian partners to explore new areas for collaboration, including fuel fabrication, innovative fuel types, and advanced reactor design.
 - **Commercial Opportunities:** The 123 Agreement will support commercial interests by allowing U.S. and Russian firms to team up more easily in joint ventures and by permitting U.S. sales of nuclear material and equipment to Russia. This will put the United States and Russia's nuclear relationship on a stronger commercial footing. Russian and U.S. firms will be able to develop advanced nuclear reactors, fuel-cycle approaches, and cutting-edge technology that are safe, secure, and reliable.
 - **Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation Action Plan:** The 123 Agreement will allow long-term civil nuclear cooperation to proceed under the U.S.-Russian Presidential Commission Working Group on Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Security, specifically activities in the Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation Action Plan which relate to reactor design, innovative nuclear energy technology options, and developing the global civil nuclear energy framework.
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4. Biden Says Taliban Momentum Has Been Arrested (01-11-2011)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States, its allies and Afghan security forces are breaking the momentum of the Taliban insurgents working to regain control over portions of Afghanistan, Vice President Biden says.

At a January 11 joint press conference in Kabul with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Biden said, "It's fair to say we have largely arrested the Taliban momentum here in some very important areas, particularly in Helmand and Kandahar." But he added that these gains since a troop surge was initiated by President Obama last year are "fragile and reversible."

“Sustaining them is going to require the Afghans to assume the responsibility for security and governance,” Biden said. “And it’s going to require more pressure on the Taliban.”

Biden, who arrived in Afghanistan January 10, and Karzai held a working lunch in the presidential palace compound, spoke in a one-to-one meeting, and met with their supporting delegations through a large part of the day January 11. Karzai said the talks centered on the U.S.-Afghan strategic partnership, security issues in Afghanistan and the region, and the complexities of the security transition process.

“We had discussions, and I’m pleased of the conclusions and of the results of our meetings,” Karzai told reporters.

Biden said that during 2011 the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force will begin to transfer responsibility for security in some provinces to the Afghan security forces, while the United States begins a “condition-based reduction” of forces starting in July. This is part of the U.S. and Afghan objective of having Afghan security in the lead throughout all of Afghanistan by 2014, he said.

It is not the intention of the United States to govern or to nation-build in Afghanistan, Biden told reporters. “As President Karzai often points out, this is the responsibility of the Afghan people, and they are fully capable of it.”

The United States stands ready to help in the effort and will continue to help after 2014, he said. The United States will not leave Afghanistan if the government and the Afghan people want U.S. personnel to remain.

“We plan on continuing to work with you, and it’s in the mutual self-interest of both our nations,” Biden said.

To maintain the support of the Afghan people and the U.S. public, Biden said, essential elements include improving the provision of basic services, promoting transparency and accountability in government, strengthening governmental agencies, and advancing efforts of “reconciliation with the Taliban” who are willing to reject al-Qaida, renounce violence and embrace the Afghan Constitution.

Biden conceded that none of this will be easy, but working together and with allies will provide a viable path toward success.

5. Gates Thanks Chinese for Easing Korean Peninsula Tensions (01-11-2011)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who is in China to strengthen military-to-military relations between the two nations, says the Chinese leadership has played a vital role in the last several months to dampen tensions on the Korean Peninsula, and the United States is appreciative.

“What I think we would like to see are some concrete actions by North Korea that show that they’re serious about moving to a negotiation and an engagement track,” Gates said at a January 11 press conference in Beijing.

Gates is visiting China, Japan and South Korea to broaden U.S. and Chinese military-to-military relations and address some of the significant security challenges in Northeast Asia. Recent provocations by the North Korean regime have done little, he said, to convince members of the Six-Party Talks that the North intends to end its nuclear weapons ambitions.

The Six-Party Talks — which involve China, Japan, North Korea, Russia, South Korea and the United States — have been held for nearly eight years, though not continuously, in an attempt to find a peaceful means of convincing the North Korean regime to forgo development of nuclear weapons and the long-range missiles to deliver them. The participants have offered a number of political, diplomatic and economic incentives, but North Korea has continued to develop a weapons program in the face of substantive sanctions.

“With the North Koreans’ continuing development of nuclear weapons and their development of intercontinental ballistic missiles, North Korea is becoming a direct threat to the United States, and we have to take that into account,” Gates told reporters.

The combination of the two development programs — weapons and missiles — is worsening the situation and strengthening the threat, he added.

“We consider this a situation of real concern, and we think there is some urgency to proceeding down the track of negotiations and engagement, but we don’t want to see the situation that we’ve seen so many times before, which is the North Koreans engage in a provocation and then everybody scrambles diplomatically to try and put relations back together again,” Gates said.

In March 2010, [North Korea fired on a South Korean naval vessel](#), killing 46 sailors, and in November 2010 [fired on a disputed island](#) between the two nations that killed two soldiers and two civilians.

Gates told reporters that talk by the North Korean regime by itself is not enough to restart full negotiations. First, steps toward convincing the other members of the Six-Party Talks of its desire to negotiate could include a moratorium on nuclear testing and missile testing.

Gates is in Beijing until January 12, and then travels to Tokyo to meet with senior Japanese officials January 13–14. Gates will make a brief stop in Seoul for talks with South Korean leaders January 14 before returning to Washington.

President Obama welcomes China’s president, Hu Jintao, to Washington for an official state visit January 19. Gates’ trip to Beijing is part of a week of activities that includes speeches by Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner in Washington on U.S.-China economic relations on January 12, Commerce Secretary Gary Locke on January 13 on U.S.-China business relations and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton on January 14 on the broader scope of U.S.-China relations.

6. Biden in Afghanistan to Assess Operations, Training (01-10-2011)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Vice President Biden is in Afghanistan to assess current operations and Afghan army and police training programs and to hold talks with President Hamid Karzai on political and economic progress, a senior U.S. administration official says.

Shortly after arriving in Kabul January 10, Biden met with U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry and U.S. Army General David Petraeus for an “update from them on the situation on the ground” before his planned meetings with senior Afghan officials, the administration official told reporters.

The meeting with Karzai will include a private luncheon as well as broader meetings with Karzai’s advisers and Eikenberry and Petraeus, he added. Some of the briefings will also focus on counterterrorism efforts and counterinsurgency training, he said.

“We’ve moved from the surge last year to the transition to Afghan lead that will be starting this year and concluding ultimately in 2014,” the administration official said during a background briefing for reporters. “So I think what Biden wants to do in the first instance is to assess the progress we’re making toward transition.”

The senior administration official said that everyone — NATO, the International Security Assistance Force, allies, the Afghan government and the United States — agrees that 2011 marks the beginning of the transition to Afghan lead.

“By 2014, the Afghans will be in the lead throughout the country, as President Karzai suggested,” he added.

President Obama boosted U.S. forces in Afghanistan to more than 100,000 personnel after adding a surge of about 30,000 forces in late 2009 and 2010 to further strengthen counterinsurgency operations to halt attempts by the former Taliban regime to regain control of sections of the nation. The surge was also part of a greater plan to eventually transition responsibility for the country’s security to Afghan army and police forces.

The senior administration official told reporters that the main objective and goal is to have Afghan forces in the lead by 2014 throughout the country.

“President Obama was very clear during the review,” the administration official said, referring to the December White House review of the administration’s Afghanistan and Pakistan policies. “We’re not here to govern Afghanistan. We’re not here to nation-build. Those are responsibilities that belong to the Afghans.”

The senior administration official said that by July 2011, the plan is still on track for the United States to begin drawing down some forces, but it is conditions-based at that time.

7. Clinton: Iran Sanctions Working, Need to Be Maintained (01-10-2011)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said economic sanctions are slowing down Iran's ability to acquire nuclear weapons, and she urged Iran's neighbors to maintain pressure on the country.

Speaking January 10 to university students in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, Clinton said, "The most recent analysis is that sanctions have been working" and they "have made it much more difficult for Iran to pursue its nuclear ambitions."

She said technological problems have also forced Iran to "slow down its timetable."

In remarks January 9 while en route to the United Arab Emirates, Clinton was asked about an Israeli intelligence assessment that said Iran may not have a nuclear weapons capability before 2015. She said the analysis should not detract from the serious concerns the international community has over Iran's nuclear activities.

"The timeline is not so important as the international effort to try to ensure that, whatever the timeline, Iran is not pursuing nuclear weapons," Clinton said.

"I don't know that it gives much comfort to somebody who is in the Gulf or is in a country that Iran has vowed to destroy that it's a one-year or three-year time frame," she added.

The United States has consistently told its friends and partners in the Middle East that "there is no part of the world that has more at stake in trying to deter Iran from becoming the creator and possessor of nuclear weapons than you," the secretary said.

The regional and international focus should remain on the sanctions, which Clinton said "have had a very significant impact," and she urged the international community to "keep that pressure on."

Iran's nuclear activities are "a serious concern," she said. "We expect all of our partners who share that concern, as these countries certainly do, to stay as focused as they can and to do everything within reason that will help to implement these sanctions."

8. U.S., China Defense Leaders Hold Critical Talks (01-10-2011)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States and China are working to improve relations between their militaries to manage common security problems, and also to avoid the chances of miscommunication and misunderstanding, Defense Secretary Robert Gates says.

"In order to reduce the chances of miscommunication, misunderstanding or miscalculation, it is important that our military-to-military ties are solid, consistent and not subject to shifting political winds," [Gates said January 10](#) at a joint press conference in Beijing with General Liang Guanglie.

“Both President Obama and President Hu Jintao have stressed that building a sustained and reliable relationship between our two militaries is an indispensable part of strengthening our two nations’ broader relationship,” Gates said. The defense secretary is scheduled to meet with the Chinese leader during his visit to Beijing.

Gates is in Beijing for security talks until January 12, and then travels to Tokyo to meet with senior Japanese officials January 13–14. He will also make a brief stop in Seoul for talks with South Korean leaders on January 14 before returning to Washington. The defense talks underscore the United States’ commitment to improved Northeast Asian security in the aftermath of recent provocations by North Korea.

In October 2010, Gates met with Liang, who is China’s national defense minister, while in Hanoi, Vietnam, to attend the first Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ Defense Ministers Meeting Plus. Gates accepted Liang’s invitation to visit China this year.

The United States and China have agreed to pursue a number of priority areas of cooperation, which were originally agreed to in October 2009, Gates told reporters. These areas include improving maritime security, which includes search and rescue; humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; counterpiracy; counterterrorism; maintaining peace and security on the Korean Peninsula; preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon; and addressing the spread of nuclear, space, cyber and missile technology.

North Korea’s pursuit of nuclear weapons and the long-range missiles to deliver them continues to be a central security issue facing the region and beyond. China is one of the members of the Six-Party Talks working to convince North Korean officials to forego nuclear weapons development. Joining China, which chairs the talks, are South Korea, Japan, Russia and the United States.

Gates said a working group to improve military-to-military ties has been established. The group will begin meeting and present a framework to foster relations during the 2011 Defense Consultative Talks, Gates said.

“We also agreed to hold working group meetings under the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement to discuss future operational safety and to build cooperation in the maritime domain,” he said. “I was pleased that General Liang noted and said that the Chinese side would consider and study the beginning of a strategic security dialogue, as part of a broader Strategic and Economic Dialogue, that covers nuclear, missile defense, space and cyber issues.”

President Obama welcomes Chinese President Hu to Washington for an official state visit January 19. Gates’ four-day trip to Beijing is part of a week of activities that includes speeches by Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner in Washington on U.S.-China economic relations January 12, Commerce Secretary Gary Locke on January 13 on U.S.-China business relations, and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton on January 14 on the broader scope of U.S.-China relations.

Liang said at the joint press conference that at the invitation of Navy Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Chen Bingde, a member of the Central Military Commission and chief of the People’s Liberation Army General Staff, will visit the United States later this year.

“We affirmed that planned exchanges will be conducted in such areas as high-level visits, institutionalized exchange programs and military education,” Liang told reporters. The two

militaries are working together in nontraditional security areas including counterterrorism, peacekeeping, counterpiracy, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, Liang added.

Liang said he and Gates talked in-depth on the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

[Press Briefing by Defense Secretary Gates, China's General Liang](#)

9. U.S. Condemns Attacks in Egypt, Nigeria, Iraq (01-03-2011)

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama and other U.S. government officials condemned deadly terrorist bombings that targeted Christians in Egypt and Iraq and people gathering in Nigeria for New Year's celebrations.

Obama denounced an attack on a church in Alexandria, Egypt, calling the bombing that killed 21 people and wounded several dozen more "barbaric and heinous" in a January 1 statement.

"The perpetrators of this attack were clearly targeting Christian worshipers, and have no respect for human life and dignity," Obama said. "They must be brought to justice."

Both Christians and Muslims were injured in the church bombing. State Department spokesman Mark Toner said the United States extends "deepest condolences to the victims and loved ones of those injured and killed from both Christian and Muslim communities."

Toner said the United States joins Iraqi officials in condemning recent violence against Christians in Iraq.

"President Talabani, Prime Minister Maliki, and virtually every political bloc and major religious leader in Iraq have denounced attacks on Christians and stressed the centrality of Christians in the fabric of Iraqi society," Toner said.

He commended the Iraqi government for increasing security measures to protect Christian communities after an October 31 suicide bombing attack on an Iraqi church, and called for the government to "redouble its efforts to protect Christians and apprehend the terrorists who are behind these acts."

Obama also denounced an attack near an army barracks in Abuja, Nigeria, which he said killed at least 20 people and wounded many more.

"Killing innocent civilians who were simply gathering — like so many people around the world — to celebrate the beginning of a new year further demonstrates the bankrupt vision of those who carry out these attacks," the president said.

He said the United States is ready to offer assistance to the Nigerian and Egyptian governments as they work to bring the perpetrators to justice.

"We stand with the Nigerian and Egyptian people at this difficult time," Obama said.
