

**INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE**  
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**1. [Obama Promises Full Investigation of Afghanistan Shootings \(03-13-2012\)](#)**

By Jim Garamone  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, March 13, 2012 – President Barack Obama today said the United States takes seriously the March 11 murder of Afghan civilians and promised Afghan leaders a full investigation into the incident.

“We’re heartbroken over the loss of innocent life,” Obama said of the incident in Kandahar province where an American soldier allegedly left his combat outpost and murdered Afghan civilians.

Defense officials have not been able to determine the exact number of people killed, and the investigation continues.

Obama called Afghan President Hamid Karzai and spoke about the incident, which he addressed today at a White House news briefing centered mostly about trade with China. “The killing of innocent civilians is outrageous, and it’s unacceptable,” the president said. “It’s not who we are as a country, and it does not represent our military.”

The president directed the Pentagon to spare no effort in conducting a full investigation. “I can assure the American people and the Afghan people that we will follow the facts wherever they lead

us, and we will make sure that anybody who was involved is held fully accountable with the full force of the law,” he said.

International Security Assistance Force commander Marine Corps Gen. John R. Allen and the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan Crocker are in Washington on a prearranged trip and met with the president. “I have extraordinary confidence in them and in the many Americans who are serving in Afghanistan ... and who have made extraordinary sacrifices to be there,” Obama said.

The United States will stick by its strategy in Afghanistan, the president said. “We’re steadily transitioning to the Afghans, who are moving into the lead,” he said. “And that’s going to allow us to bring our troops home.”

The United States already has withdrawn 10,000 troops from Afghanistan and plans to redeploy 23,000 more by the end of the summer. “Meanwhile, we will continue the work of devastating al-Qaida’s leadership and denying them a safe haven,” the president said.

Obama said he is confident the United States can meet its objectives in Afghanistan and responsibly bring the troops home, despite difficulties there.

The shooting suspect remains in U.S. custody, Kirby said. DOD, he added, is not releasing his name “unless or until charges are preferred against the individual.”

The Army’s Criminal Investigation Division is in charge of the case. Once they finish their investigation they will send the findings to the chain of command, who will then make judicial process decisions, Kirby said.

There have been protests in Afghanistan in response to the shooting. While militants fired on an Afghan delegation that visited the village where the shooting occurred, it otherwise has been “peaceful and stable with respect to this tragic action,” Kirby said.

Kirby added that “investigators have the full support of the chain of command to talk to whoever they need to and let the investigation take them wherever they need to go.”

The suspect was based at a combat outpost in Afghanistan’s Panjwai district. The outpost provided village support operations, which primarily is provided by special operations forces, Kirby said.

Still, he said, the soldier in custody “is not a member of special operations forces and is a conventional soldier working in support of the units at the COP.”

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[Officials Believe Gunman Acted Alone](#)

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## **2. Obama, PM Cameron Joint Op-Ed: An Alliance the World Can Count On (03-13-2012)**

The following joint commentary by President Barack Obama and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom appeared in the March 13 issue of the Washington Post, and is in the public domain. There are no republication restrictions.

*An Alliance the World Can Count On*  
*By Barack Obama and David Cameron*

Seven decades ago, as our forces began to turn the tide of World War II, Prime Minister Winston Churchill traveled to Washington to coordinate our joint efforts. Our victories on the battlefield proved “what can be achieved by British and Americans working together heart and hand,” he said. “In fact, one might almost feel that if they could keep it up, there is hardly anything they could not do, either in the field of war or in the not less tangled problems of peace.”

Keep it up we have — not only winning that war for our survival but also building the institutions that undergird international peace and security. The alliance between the United States and Great Britain is a partnership of the heart, bound by the history, traditions and values we share. But what makes our relationship special — a unique and essential asset — is that we join hands across so many endeavors. Put simply, we count on each other and the world counts on our alliance.

As leading world economies, we are coordinating closely with our G-8 and G-20 partners to put people back to work, sustain the global recovery, stand with our European friends as they resolve their debt crisis and curb the reckless financial practices that have cost our taxpayers dearly. We’re committed to expanding the trade and investment that support millions of jobs in our two countries.

As the two largest contributors to the international mission in Afghanistan, we’re proud of the progress our troops have made in dismantling al-Qaeda, breaking the Taliban’s momentum and training Afghan forces. But as recent events underscore, this remains a difficult mission. We honor the profound sacrifices of our forces, and in their name we’ll carry on the mission.

Over the next few days, we will consult about preparations for the NATO summit in Chicago, where our alliance will determine the next phase of the transition that we agreed to in Lisbon. This includes shifting to a support role in advance of Afghans taking full responsibility for security in 2014 and ensuring that NATO maintains an enduring commitment so that Afghanistan is never again a haven for al-Qaeda to launch attacks against our citizens.

As members of the international community, we have been united in imposing tough sanctions on the Iranian regime for failing to meet its international obligations. We believe there is time and space to pursue a diplomatic solution, and we are coordinating our diplomatic approach with China, France, Germany and Russia, our P5+1 partners. Meanwhile, as the United States imposes its strongest sanctions to date and the European Union prepares to impose an embargo on Iranian oil, the choice for Tehran will be sharpened — meet your international obligations or face the consequences.

As two nations that support the human rights and dignity of all people, we continue to stand with those brave citizens across the Middle East and North Africa who are demanding their universal rights. Having joined in the mission to protect the Libyan people last year, we support Libyan efforts to build democratic institutions and hold free and fair elections this year. We condemn the Syrian regime’s horrific violence against innocent civilians, and we are focused on the urgent humanitarian task of getting food and medicine to those in need. With our international partners,

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we'll continue to tighten the noose around Bashar al-Assad and his cohorts, and we'll work with the opposition and the United Nations - Arab League envoy Kofi Annan to plan for the transition that will follow Assad's departure from power.

As two of the world's wealthiest nations, we embrace our responsibility as leaders in the development that enables people to live in dignity, health and prosperity. Even as we redouble our efforts to save lives in Somalia, we're investing in agriculture to promote food security across the developing world. We're working to improve maternal health and end preventable deaths of children. With a renewed commitment to the lifesaving work of the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria, we see the beginning of the end of the AIDS pandemic. Through our Open Government Partnership, we're striving to make governments more transparent and accountable.

Finally, as two peoples who live free because of the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, we're working together like never before to care for them when they come home. With new long-term collaborations to help our wounded warriors recover, assist in veterans' transition back to civilian life and support military families, we recognize that our obligations to troops and veterans endure long after today's battles end.

Our troops and citizens have long shown what can be achieved when British and Americans work together, heart and hand, and why this remains an essential relationship — to our nations and the world. So like generations before us, we're going to keep it up. Because with confidence in our cause and faith in each other, we still believe that there is hardly anything we cannot do.

(Barack Obama is president of the United States. David Cameron is prime minister of Great Britain.)

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### **3. Clinton Urges U.N. Security Council Unity on Syria (03-12-2012)**

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton called on members of the U.N. Security Council, including Russia and China, to join the international community in saying with one voice that the killing of innocent Syrians by their government must stop and a political transition from Bashar al-Assad's regime must begin.

Speaking at the Security Council in New York March 12, Clinton said that although the United States firmly believes that each U.N. member state should enjoy sovereignty and territorial integrity, "we do not believe that sovereignty demands that this council stand silent when governments massacre their own people, threatening regional peace and security in the process."

In addition, the Obama administration rejects "any equivalence between premeditated murders by a government's military machine and the actions of civilians under siege driven to self-defense," she said.

The secretary said it was "cynical" that the Syrian military was carrying out assaults against civilians March 11 at the same time Assad was meeting with the Arab League's peace envoy, former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

“We believe that now is the time for all nations, even those who have previously blocked our efforts, to stand behind the humanitarian and political approach spelled out by the Arab League. The international community should say with one voice, without hesitation or caveat, that the killings of innocent Syrians must stop and a political transition must begin,” Clinton said.

Speaking at a media stakeout in New York March 12, Clinton said Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had met with the Arab League and had agreed that it is necessary to end the violence and allow unimpeded humanitarian access to the Syrian people. He had also agreed to Annan’s leadership of a political process to resolve the conflict based on the Arab League’s peace plan and U.N. General Assembly resolutions, Clinton said.

In her meeting with Lavrov earlier in the day, “I pointed out my very strong view that the alternative to our unity on these points will be bloody internal conflict with dangerous consequences for the whole region,” she said.

“Now, Foreign Minister Lavrov will take what he heard here back to Moscow, and we are all waiting to hear from former Secretary-General Kofi Annan as to his advice about the best way forward,” she said.

The United States wants to give Annan “the space and time to develop his recommendations,” Clinton said, and if he “comes back with a slightly different formulation that we think will work, we’re going to be very respectful of that.”

In her remarks before the Security Council, Clinton said the political protests in Syria and elsewhere that have swept the Middle East and North Africa have “sprung from a common desire for rights, freedom, economic hope and human dignity,” and the peoples of the region “deserve and demand our collective support.”

The Obama administration is approaching the developments in the region “with a healthy dose of humility,” she said, “because we know that these revolutions are not ours. They are not by us, for us, or against us.”

But at the same time, the international community has “the resources and capabilities to support those who seek peaceful, meaningful, democratic change,” and it must have the will to do so, she told the Security Council.

[Secretary Clinton’s Press Briefing at United Nations](#) (03-12-2012)

[Secretary Clinton at U.N. Security Council on Middle East](#) (03-12-2012)

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#### **4. Obama: 2012 G8 and NATO Summits Scheduled for May (03-12-2012)**

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama says he will host the 2012 Group of Eight (G8) summit of advanced economies outside Washington at the Maryland presidential retreat of Camp David to discuss long-term global economic recovery. He will also host the 28-member NATO Summit in Chicago this spring for talks on defense and security cooperation.

When the two summits were first announced, the White House had said it would host both events back-to-back in Chicago, the president's hometown. But the president said during a news conference recently that splitting the two summits was an idea proposed to him after the initial announcement.

The G8 summit is set for May 18–19 and the NATO summit for May 20–21. The G8 consists of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States. All but Japan and Russia are also members of the NATO alliance, though Russia participates in the NATO-Russia Council normally held on the second day of NATO's annual summit.

“Somebody pointed out that I hadn't had any of my counterparts, who I've worked with now for three years, up to Camp David,” Obama told reporters at a March 6 White House press conference. Obama told reporters that security concerns for the G8 leaders did not prompt the change from Chicago to Camp David.

The presidency of the G8 rotates among the eight nations annually. Besides hosting the annual summit, the host country also sets the agenda for the meetings. The G8 invites other nations to deal with specific security and economic issues. There are also a limited number of meetings among individual leaders on the sidelines throughout the summit.

Camp David is an official presidential retreat located in the wooded hills near Thurmont, Maryland, which is about 100 kilometers north of Washington in the Catoctin Mountains. The facility is formally known as Naval Support Facility Thurmont and is staffed by Navy and Marine Corps personnel.

When it was converted into a presidential retreat in 1942 for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, it was named Shangri-La. It was renamed Camp David in the early 1950s by President Dwight David Eisenhower in honor of his father and grandson.

Obama said the G8 meeting, though an official summit of world leaders, tends to be an informal setting in which the eight leaders discuss a wide range of political, economic and security issues in a way more give-and-take than structured. He said his White House advisers believe that Camp David's casual backdrop might be more conducive to the talks.

The global economy, still recovering from the 2007–2009 recession, has been buffeted by wide swings in oil prices, financial crises in Europe and slowly recovering employment. The United States, under a National Export Initiative launched by Obama, has been trying to shift a largely consumer-dominated economy to one more balanced with a broader export sector.

Obama said the G8 summit will give him his first opportunity to spend time with Russian President-elect Vladimir Putin. Immediately after the summit concludes, most of the leaders will travel to Chicago for the two-day NATO meetings.

The White House said the NATO summit “will be the premier opportunity this year for the president to continue his efforts to strengthen NATO in order to ensure that the Atlantic Alliance remains the most successful alliance in history, while charting the way forward in Afghanistan.”

Afghanistan is expected to be a significant topic for the 28-nation Atlantic alliance in addition to broader defense and security cooperation issues. The international alliance in Afghanistan is beginning a gradual transition process in which the Afghan National Army assumes an increasing role for the country's security against a Taliban insurgency.

The strategy calls for the International Security Assistance Force to turn over increasing responsibility to Afghans and a full transition so that NATO's combat role is over by the end of 2014.

“Our coalition partners have agreed to it,” Obama told reporters March 6. “They are sticking with it. That continues to be the plan.”

The transition plan will be examined at length during the Chicago summit to make sure it is working as it was intended, that proper benchmarks and steps are taken during the transition, and that Afghan security capacity is built and the partnering with Afghan security forces is effective, Obama said.

When NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen visited Washington for talks with Obama in November 2011, they agreed that the Chicago summit should seek to further broaden and deepen NATO's relationships with non-NATO partner nations, according to the White House.

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## **5. Clinton: U.S. Consulting Closely with Seoul on North Korea (03-09-2012)**

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) will continue to closely consult with each other on developments related to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (also known as North Korea).

Speaking with Republic of Korea Foreign Minister Kim Sung-Hwan at the State Department March 9, Clinton said the U.S.-ROK alliance is “a linchpin of America's strategic engagement in the Asia Pacific.”

“Any effort by anyone to drive a wedge between the United States and the Republic of Korea will fail. We consult closely on all aspects of our diplomacy. This will not change,” Clinton said, adding that both countries also believe it important to closely consult with Japan on the DPRK issue.

On February 29, the State Department announced that the DPRK had agreed to implement a moratorium on its long-range missile launches, nuclear tests and nuclear activities at the Yongbyon nuclear facility, including its uranium enrichment activities. The DPRK also agreed to allow IAEA inspectors to verify and monitor the moratorium on its Yongbyon uranium enrichment activities and confirm the disablement of its 5-megawatt nuclear reactor and associated facilities.

“This is a modest step in the right direction, and we will be watching closely and judging the DPRK's leaders by their actions,” Clinton said.

Separately, U.S. and DPRK negotiators also recently concluded discussions on administrative details concerning the proposed U.S. nutritional assistance program to the DPRK. The 240,000-metric-ton program includes strict verification measures to ensure that U.S. nutritional assistance will reach those most in need of it.

“Our team just met in Beijing with DPRK officials to discuss the administrative details of this program, and we are working to move it forward soon,” she said.

The secretary noted that on March 15 the U.S.-Republic of Korea free trade agreement will take effect, and “we believe that this agreement will create tens of thousands of jobs in both of our countries.”

The United States and the Republic of Korea are building a global partnership, she said.

“Korea is an economic, political strategic leader not only in the Asia-Pacific but around the world,” Clinton said.

Kim said the government of the Republic of Korea welcomes the results of the recent U.S.-DPRK discussions and “appreciated the close ROK-U.S. coordination that was intact throughout the dialogue process between Washington and Pyongyang.”

In their talks, Kim said, Clinton told him “there will not be a fundamental improvement of relations between Washington and Pyongyang without an improvement of inter-Korean relations, and we both agreed that dialogue should be promoted and relationship improved between the two Koreas.”

The alliance between the Republic of Korea and the United States is “in its best-ever shape,” Kim said, and it has been “the cornerstone of peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia for the last 60 years, based on our common values and convictions, namely, free democracy and market economy.”

[Clinton, South Korean Foreign Minister Kim After Their Meeting](#) (03-09-2012)

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## **6. Libya’s New Leaders Making Quick Progress, Clinton Says (03-08-2012)**

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton praised the work of Libya’s interim government and its positive encouragement of better governance, the private sector and Libyan civil society in the four months it has been in power.

Speaking with Libyan Prime Minister Abdurrahim ElKeib at the State Department March 8, Clinton said Muammar Qadhafi’s 42-year reign in which he ruled through “intimidation and division” had hollowed out Libya’s institutions, but ElKeib and his government have shown “essential and effective leadership” and had begun the difficult task of putting Libya back together.

”We’ve seen progress in each of the three key areas of democratic society: building an accountable, effective government; promoting a strong private sector; and developing a vibrant civil society. And we will stand with the people of Libya as it continues this important work,” Clinton said.

Libya’s constitutional assembly elections, scheduled for June, and the establishment of a supreme elections commission offer “a critical first step that will pave the way for a new constitution grounded in democratic principles,” she said.

The Obama administration has offered to help the Libyan government in its investigation of alleged human rights violations, and Clinton said the United States is encouraged by its commitment to promote human rights and the rule of law.

It is also supporting Libya's "booming new civil society," through the Middle East Partnership Initiative and the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives, she said.

In addition, the secretary said, the United States and the United Nations "have removed almost all restrictions on doing business, and we are encouraging American companies to look for opportunities inside Libya."

ElKeib thanked the United States and other countries that supported Libya's opposition during Qadhafi's reign and said his country is "very proud of our young men and women who brought freedom to our country after 42 years of a brutal regime that nobody felt would disappear in eight months."

Showing courage and resilience, "our citizen army of teachers and mechanics, lawyers, students, professors, our sons and daughters suffered great losses along with the civilian population, but ... in the end, we succeeded in making the dream of a free Libya a reality, and we'll keep it that way," he said.

Libya, ElKeib said, needed a "facelift," and "the revolution has given it to her."

Now the Libyan people "are putting the same energy and determination that fueled the revolution into establishing a new Libya that has a positive contribution, maybe in a small way, at least, to the environment around it and to the world around it," he said.

Clinton's meeting with ElKeib came one day after the Libyan prime minister met with President Obama at the White House. According to [a March 7 White House summary of their meeting](#), Obama encouraged ElKeib "to continue plans to hold national elections in June and stressed the importance of transparency and engagement with Libya's newly energized civil society as the government develops accountable institutions."

The White House reported that the two leaders also discussed a range of security issues, including increased cooperation on border management, weapons security, and regional counterterrorism concerns.

A senior Obama administration official who asked not to be identified [told reporters on a conference call March 8](#) that life in Libya is not only returning to normal after many months of conflict, but that the country has already improved in many ways from the normalcy that existed under Qadhafi.

"Libyans are exercising their newfound freedoms in ways previously unimaginable. The sense of a people breathing freedom for the first time is palpable. They are holding peaceful protests. They are forming political parties," and "neighborhood cafes are bristling with passionate discussions about every topic under the sun," the official said.

Libya's economy has also improved, with some businesses reporting booming sales, and Libya has shocked U.S. analysts because its oil production levels are rapidly approaching their pre-revolution levels. Its oil ministry has announced that it expects the production rate to reach the pre-conflict level of 1.7 million barrels per day by the coming summer, the official said.

The Libyan government continues to struggle with some difficult issues, but "given where they have come from, I think they have achieved quite a lot in the last four months, and the United States

intends to be a firm partner with them, just as we supported them during the revolution,” the official said.

[Clinton, Libyan Prime Minister Elkeib After Their Meeting](#)  
[Background Briefing by U.S. Official on Libya](#)

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## **7. U.S. Contribution for More Humanitarian Aid for Syrians (03-08-2012)**

U.S. Mission to the United Nations  
Press Release  
Geneva, Switzerland  
March 8, 2012

### U.S. Makes Additional Contribution to Humanitarian Relief for Syrians Affected by Conflict

The United States government has announced an additional contribution of \$2 million in humanitarian assistance for Syrians affected by the on-going conflict. Deputy Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Kelly T. Clements confirmed this contribution at the March 8, 2012 Syria Humanitarian Forum. The United States was also represented at the Forum by Mark Bartolini, Director of the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

With this additional \$2 million, the United States is providing over \$12 million in humanitarian assistance. These funds are providing emergency medical care in Syria, and the delivery of clean water, food, blankets, heaters, and hygiene kits to Syrian civilians in need. In announcing the additional humanitarian assistance, Ms. Clements underscored that the real barrier to providing life-saving relief to Syrians is access to those in need.

“Safe access to affected areas, in order to identify the greatest needs and deliver needed assistance, is still not permitted by the Syrian regime. All parties to the conflict have the responsibility to grant and secure this access,” Ms. Clements said. “We urge all parties to permit immediate, safe, and unhindered access by humanitarian agencies to affected areas.”

“The most pressing issue is not humanitarian funding; it is the urgency to end the violence and reach people in need with humanitarian assistance,” Mr. Bartolini said. “Conditions in affected areas of Syria are dire and worsening, and time is not on our side.”

The United States appreciates the efforts of the U.N.'s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and ECHO, the European Commission's humanitarian aid service, who jointly chaired the first meeting of the Syria Humanitarian Forum. The United States will continue to support the important work that international and non-governmental organizations carry out in the region in conjunction with the generous nations of Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq, who are hosting and assisting those fleeing the brutal violence in Syria.

The UN's initiative to bring together member states, regional organizations, UN humanitarian agencies, international organizations and NGOs to coordinate humanitarian efforts sends an abiding message on universal humanitarian goals and a harmonized international response. "These are humanitarian actions. It is important to keep the humanitarian and political tracks separate and distinct to give both the maximum chances of success," said Clements.

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