

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
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1. [NATO Must Transform to Have Global Mission, Clinton Says \(04-04-2012\)](#)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — NATO is looking beyond the challenges of its founding in the Cold War struggle with Soviet Russia toward an alliance that works to ensure dignity and prosperity for people worldwide, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said April 3.

[Speaking to the World Affairs Council 2012 NATO](#) Conference in Norfolk, Virginia, Clinton said the alliance, formed in 1949, needs to transform itself so that it can continue to champion the principles of “democracy, liberty and the rule of law” around the world as part of what she termed “a battle for the future.”

Across the planet, emerging powers are rising and technology is working to connect “more people in more places, and empowering them to influence global events and participate in the global economy like never before,” she said, adding, “This is all occurring against the backdrop of a recovering economy from the worst recession in recent memory.”

Ahead of the May 20–21 NATO summit, which will be held in Chicago, the secretary told members of the alliance that “the problems we face today are not limited to one ocean, and neither can our work be.”

She cited the example of Libya and how NATO’s work to protect Libyans from the regime of Muammar Qadhafi in 2011 was “a massive and complex undertaking,” but added it is “no exaggeration to say that thousands of Libyans are alive today because of your work.”

In Chicago, NATO members will recognize how their cooperation helped to defend “common values” in the Balkans, Afghanistan, the Middle East and North Africa, she said.

“We want to learn what worked and what didn’t, and I do believe in evidenced-based planning. And what we see in NATO is a very impressive example of that. It’s not only the planning that looks forward, but it’s the lessons learned that help us look backward to make that forward planning even better,” Clinton said.

NATO members will also discuss the next phase in the transition of security responsibility for Afghanistan to Afghan forces by 2014, and reductions in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for Afghanistan from “a predominantly combat role to a supporting role” through training, advice and assistance in 2013, she said.

At the invitation of the Afghan government, some ISAF forces may remain after 2014, she said, but “we do not seek permanent American military bases in Afghanistan or a presence that is considered a threat to the neighbors, which leads to instability that threatens the gains that have been made in Afghanistan.”

Clinton said a stable Afghanistan is in the interests of both NATO and the United States, and the Obama administration remains committed to achieving it, as well as to supporting Afghan reconciliation efforts to end conflict there.

She called on Taliban rebels to “make unambiguous statements distancing themselves from international terrorism and committing to a peace process that includes all Afghans.”

The secretary urged support for Afghanistan’s economic development, saying projects like the [New Silk Road Initiative](#) that would create economic and transit connections between the country and its South and Central Asian neighbors “will bind together a region too long torn apart by conflict and division.” Afghanistan’s political future and the economic future of the entire region, Clinton said, are “inextricably linked” to Afghanistan’s economic success.

“That is a lesson we have learned over and over all over the world: People need a realistic hope for a better life, a job and a chance to provide for their family,” she said.

FORMER SECRETARY MARSHALL SAW THE NEED TO INVEST IN OTHERS

In earlier [remarks in Lexington, Virginia](#), April 3, Clinton invoked the memory of former U.S. General and Secretary of State George Marshall, who had urged Americans to help rebuild Europe in the aftermath of World War II.

In Marshall’s efforts was “a recognition that advancing our own interests depends on improving the conditions in which other human beings around the world live,” she said.

In his farewell remarks on leaving military service, Marshall said, “Along with the great problem of maintaining the peace, we must solve the problem of the pittance of food, of clothing and coal and homes. Neither of these problems can be solved alone. They are directly related to one another,” Clinton recalled.

Marshall looked at “a Europe shattered by war,” and “knew that hunger and poverty would ultimately undermine our own prosperity and opportunity, that desperation and chaos would ultimately give rise to forces that would threaten us here at home,” she said.

“Today, we can see the truth of those insights in so many ways. We see how some of the greatest threats to our security come from a lack of opportunity, the denial of human rights, a changing climate, strains on water, food, and energy,” Clinton said.

Both research and experience suggest that about 40 percent of countries recovering from conflict “revert to violence within a decade,” she said. “But when they grow their economies and raise people’s income, the risk of violence drops substantially. And there is no better way of doing that than introducing free-market principles, encouraging entrepreneurship, creating conditions for men and women to see the results of their own labor in rising incomes and better opportunities for their children.”

Clinton said Marshall understood that “in order for America to have peace and prosperity, we have to invest in that potential for others.” Clinton called on all Americans to “channel our doubts and uncertainty into a call to be better and stronger.”

2. Clinton Announces \$12 Million More in Aid to Syrians (04-02-2012)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the United States is increasing its humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people by more than \$12 million, bringing its total aid in response to the Syrian government’s brutal crackdown against its people to \$25 million.

Clinton announced the aid increase in Istanbul April 1 after Syrian opposition representatives met with her and officials from more than 70 countries to discuss ways of supporting the Syrian people.

“We will be providing greater humanitarian relief to people in need, and we will support the opposition as it works toward an inclusive democratic transition that preserves the integrity and institutions of the Syrian state,” Clinton said.

According to an April 1 State Department fact sheet, the U.S. humanitarian assistance includes \$10.5 million for the World Food Programme (WFP); \$8.5 million for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); \$3 million for the International Committee of the Red Cross; and \$2.8 million for nongovernmental organizations.

The assistance “includes medical supplies and other humanitarian relief for displaced and vulnerable and besieged Syrian communities,” the stockpiling of additional supplies, and the improvement of logistical capacity for their delivery as conditions in currently inaccessible parts of the country allow, the fact sheet said.

The WFP estimates that 1.4 million people lack food security as a result of the violence, and the organization is currently providing assistance to 100,000 people inside Syria. The WFP food rations are targeting “displaced Syrians and host families, households that have lost breadwinners or livelihoods, female-headed households, and unaccompanied minors,” according to the fact sheet.

In addition, UNHCR “is delivering critical medical services and supplies, food, water, blankets, hygiene kits, and heaters” to Syrians who have fled to Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, and to host families that are sheltering them, the fact sheet said.

The Bashar al-Assad regime reportedly agreed to implement a peace plan supported by U.N. special envoy Kofi Annan that calls for an internationally supervised end to the violence, the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance and a Syrian-led political process. Clinton noted that one week after the regime’s pledge, it has still failed to deliver on its promises.

“Rather than pulling back, Assad’s troops have launched new assaults. Rather than allowing access for humanitarian aid, they have tightened their siege. And rather than beginning a political transition, the regime has crushed dozens of peaceful protests. We can only conclude that Assad has decided to add to his long list of broken promises,” she said.

Clinton renewed her call for an immediate end to the killing and said the international community needs to set a timeline for the next steps to take if Assad continues his refusal to implement Annan’s plan, saying, “There cannot be process for the sake of process.” She expressed concern that the Syrian leader may only be stalling to gain time to totally suppress the opposition.

GATHERING EVIDENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS ATROCITIES

The United States is also working to establish a “Syria Accountability Clearinghouse” and is giving \$1.25 million for the project and its ability to compile evidence that could be used in future prosecutions and reconciliation efforts.

According to an April 2 State Department fact sheet, the Clearinghouse will train Syrians and partner groups to “collect, collate, analyze, and securely store evidence, documentation, and other information concerning human rights abuses and violations, while protecting witnesses and sources.”

The records compiled by lawyers, activists and others “could be used for a broad range of transitional justice and reconciliation processes, including truth-seeking, memorialisation, and prosecutions,” the fact sheet said, and can help “develop trial-ready dossiers against individuals responsible for violations of international or domestic criminal law.”

[Ambassador Rice After U.N. Security Council Briefing on Syria](#)
[State Department on Syria Accountability Clearinghouse](#)
[Fact Sheet on Additional U.S. Humanitarian Aid for Syrians](#)

3. U.S. Sends Aid, Urges End to Sudan–South Sudan Violence (04-02-2012)

By Charlene Porter
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama expressed concern about growing tensions between Sudan and South Sudan when speaking April 2 to South Sudanese President Salva Kiir about the clashes in the border region between the two East African nations.

The president also expressed hope that a presidential summit that had been set for this week between Kiir and Sudan's Omar Al-Bashir will be rescheduled. A [statement from the White House](#)

press office said Obama welcomed Kiir's commitment to moving forward with that meeting and to finding peaceful solutions for Sudan and South Sudan.

South Sudan claimed its independence from Khartoum in July 2011 after six years of autonomy and a referendum on nationhood. That victory came only after 20 years of violence, which claimed a high cost in loss of life and a lack of development at all levels.

But Sudan is engaged in further battles against an insurgent group in its southern states. Sudan is using heavy weaponry and aerial bombing to subdue rebels in the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton described that action as "disproportionate force" in comments to reporters March 27.

This violence has created a growing humanitarian emergency as civilians flee the fighting in search of safety across the border in South Sudan where there is little infrastructure and few resources to support them, according to an April 2 telephone briefing by U.S. officials involved in the aid relief.

Catherine Wiesner, deputy assistant secretary of state for population, refugees and migration, just returned from a visit to the remote region of South Sudan where refugee encampments have sprung up in recent months. She said the international humanitarian effort is building what is needed as it is needed. "So UNHCR [the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees] and partners are fixing an airfield, they're building roads, they're drilling bore holes" for water. Wiesner said water is in very short supply for about 140,000 new refugees who have surged into South Sudan since the end of 2011.

"Agencies are in a race against time to get supplies in place," Wiesner said, before the rainy season begins in about a month and makes the region's poorly developed roads even more difficult for aid transport.

Wiesner said the World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that about 1 million people in South Sudan are severely "food insecure" at present, and that as many as 4.7 million will face some degree of food insecurity in the year ahead.

The United Nations and the African Union are in discussions with Sudan's government in Khartoum, trying to get permission for direct delivery of humanitarian relief to the internally displaced populations affected by violence in South Kordofan, where it is estimated another 200,000–250,000 people do not have enough to eat.

"We think direct delivery of aid to Kordofan is vital and it is very high priority," said Princeton Lyman, the U.S. special envoy for Sudan and South Sudan.

The violence in Kordofan and Blue Nile states disrupted the planting season in 2011, said an official with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and that's one reason for the high level of food insecurity.

Christa Capozzola, USAID's deputy assistant administrator for democracy, conflict and humanitarian assistance, said South Sudan's order in January for petroleum companies to stop oil production is another factor potentially worsening the crisis. The decision will reduce South Sudan's capacity to provide aid for its own people, many of whom are returning to the south after years of civil war ended with independence.

South Sudan has oil reserves, but the oil must be transported via pipeline from landlocked South Sudan across Sudan to the Persian Gulf and the markets beyond. South Sudan's government in Juba turned off the flow in early 2012, charging that the Sudanese are siphoning off hundreds of millions of dollars worth of oil.

"It's very important that both sides be extremely careful," Lyman said, "that neither crosses the line of attacking oil installations because I think that would deepen the conflict very much." He said it's important that the two governments discuss these issues "very candidly" in the interest of stability for both nations.

Despite the postponement of the summit at the presidential level, Lyman said, other talks are going on between the two nations, giving reason for optimism that tensions may ease.

"A meeting is under way of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, a very important military-to-military discussion between the two countries under the auspices of the African Union," Lyman said. He praised the AU for its effort to mediate the dispute between Sudan and South Sudan.

The United States, the world's largest food-aid donor, has given more than \$80 million to WFP to support the operations in Sudan and South Sudan. Another \$6 million has gone to the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration.

[U.S. Officials on Humanitarian Situation in Sudan, South Sudan](#)

[4. Military Observation Flights Bolster Peace in Europe \(03-28-2012\)](#)

By Phillip Kurata
Staff Writer

Washington — The chief U.S. arms control official has called on former Cold War adversaries to continue cooperating to improve the effectiveness of military observation flights over each other's territory to minimize the chance of triggering an accidental war.

"Together we have progressed from 'peaceful coexistence' during the Cold War to what I would now call an era of 'peaceful partnership,'" Acting Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller said in Vienna March 27.

She spoke in praise of the 1992 Open Skies Treaty, in which 24 member countries of NATO and the former Warsaw Pact agreed to allow military observation flights over their territory. Quoting former Secretary of State James Baker, Gottemoeller said openness and transparency in military matters is "the most direct path to greater predictability and reduced risk of inadvertent war" and that Open Skies is "potentially the most ambitious measure to build confidence ever undertaken."

The acting under secretary said the treaty could become obsolete if its signatories do not commit sufficient resources and new technologies to keep it effective.

"The biggest single challenge we face for the continued success of the treaty is the future availability of resources. The treaty will only be as good as the states parties members make it, so we urge all parties to redouble their efforts to modernize the treaty and allow for the use of new technologies and ensure sufficient assets for future operations," she said.

Gottemoeller said the United States has begun to install digital electro-optical sensors on its observation aircraft, and she urged other treaty members to do likewise “as soon as possible.” She said the information gathered with the new technologies should “be used to address a wider range of transnational threats and verification challenges.”

Former President Dwight Eisenhower first proposed at the historic Geneva Conference in 1955 that the United States and the former Soviet Union permit each other to send observation flights over the other’s territory. His primary concern then was “to relieve the world of the great fear of surprise and devastating attack,” as quoted by Gottemoeller.

Former President George H.W. Bush reintroduced the notion in 1989, and the Open Skies Treaty was signed three years later.

Gottemoeller said the Open Skies Treaty works in conjunction with two other agreements — the Vienna Document and the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty — to ease military tensions in Europe.

The Vienna Document, signed in 1999, contains provisions for exchange and verification of military information, such as the size of defense budgets and the location, size and strength of military units, and for observation of military activities.

The Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, signed in 1990, established limits for NATO and the former Warsaw Pact on key categories of conventional military equipment in Europe and mandated the destruction of excess weaponry.

5. North American Defense Ministers Discuss Security Concerns (03-28-2012)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The first joint conference of defense ministers from Canada, Mexico and the United States provided an unprecedented opportunity to develop a common approach to continental security issues, U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta says.

The ministers pledged to coordinate armed forces support for civilian public security agencies in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and to counter illicit activities in the hemisphere that include narcotics, human trafficking and trafficking in arms.

“We also talked about threat assessment, the need for a common threat assessment on all the challenges that face this area, better military-to-military relationships and better and improved regional engagement,” [Panetta said at a March 27 press conference.](#)

Canadian Minister of National Defence Peter MacKay hosted the launch of the joint security forum in Ottawa, Canada. It included U.S. Defense Secretary Panetta, General Guillermo Galván Galván, the Mexican secretary of national defense, and Admiral Mariano Francisco Saynez Mendoza, the Mexican secretary of the Navy.

“Our countries are committed to working together to address challenges in the region,” the group said in a joint statement. “We know that transnational threats require transnational responses.”

The defense ministers agreed to develop a trilateral defense threat assessment for North America, explore ways to improve support for civilian public security agencies in countering illicit activities such as narcotics trafficking, explore new ways to collaborate and continue to improve the new defense forums.

Panetta noted that the United States and Canada have worked together in Afghanistan over the past 10 years and that U.S. and Mexican forces have long cooperated in efforts to thwart illicit drug trafficking.

“Looking ahead, the U.S. is exploring other ways to improve our defense collaboration and to focus on areas like cybersecurity and defense support to civil authorities,” he said.

MacKay told reporters at a joint press conference following their meeting that “the problems in security which our North American continent is presently facing are ever more complex. And more than ever, the security of our populations depend on the close and diverse cooperation between our governments.”

Galván told reporters that fighting against organized crime and drug trafficking represents Mexico’s highest priority. He said the main thrust of the defense forum has been to further a common understanding of the threat the region faces, guide the tasks each nation carries out and to maximize efforts at enforcement.

The joint statement from the defense ministers will be presented to the leaders of the three nations at the North American Leaders’ Summit scheduled for April 2 in Washington.

6. U.S. Treasury Dept. Exposes Iranian “Lethal Aid” (03-28-2012)

Washington — The U.S. Department of the Treasury has taken steps to disrupt efforts by Iranian entities to export lethal aid to the Levant and Africa.

In a March 27 press release, the Treasury Department said it had designated the Iranian cargo airline Yas Air, Behineh Trading, three Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps–Qods Force (IRGC-QF) officials, and Nigerian shipping agent Ali Abbas Usman Jega for acting on behalf of or providing support to the IRGC-QF, a designated terrorist entity.

“Today’s action again exposes Iran’s malign influence in the Middle East, Africa and beyond. As the Iranian regime exports its lethal aid and expertise to foment violence in Syria and Africa, Treasury will continue to expose the officials and companies involved and work to hold them accountable for the suffering they cause,” said Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen.

According to the Treasury Department, the airline, the trading company and the IRGC-QF officials were involved in shipments of weapons to the Levant and Africa.

Based in Tehran, Yas Air is an Iranian cargo airline that acts for the IRGC-QF to transport illicit cargo — including weapons — to Iran’s clients in the Levant. According to the Treasury Department, Yas Air has moved IRGC-QF personnel and weapons under the cover of humanitarian aid. In March 2011, IRGC-QF officials oversaw and authorized actions taken by Yas Air that involved a series of Yas Air flights carrying weapons destined for Syria and worked with Hezbollah and Syrian officials to ensure passage of this illicit cargo.

A Turkish inspection of one of the Yas Air flights bound for Syria, which listed “auto spare parts” on its cargo manifest, found weapons including Kalashnikov AK-47 assault rifles, machine guns, nearly 8,000 rounds of ammunition, and an assortment of mortar shells.

Behineh Trading, the shipping company, and the Nigerian agent were involved in a weapons shipment seized in Nigeria in late October 2010. This weapons shipment, hidden among construction materials, contained grenades, rockets, mortars and ammunition. The shipment, orchestrated by the IRGC-QF and intended for the Gambia, was “part of a larger pattern of Iranian lethal aid shipments to clients in Africa and around the world,” according to the Treasury Department.

These actions demonstrate “Iran’s determination to evade international sanctions and export violence and instability throughout the Middle East and beyond,” the department said.
