

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
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1. 'Fiscal Cliff' Threatens Defense Strategy, Panetta Says (12-18-2012)

By Karen Parrish
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 18, 2012 – The year-old defense strategy Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta helped put in place last January faces two major risks, he said today: stress on the force, and a political system “that is depriving the department of the budget certainty we need ... to plan for the future.”

Speaking at the National Press Club here, the secretary noted Defense Department and service leaders have advanced the new strategy significantly over the past year. Panetta reminded the audience it rests on five elements:

- A smaller, leaner but agile and technologically capable force;
- Maintaining military presence and force-projection capability in the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific;
- Building partnerships and partner capacity around the world through innovative rotational deployments;

- Remaining capable of confronting and defeating any adversary; and
- Protecting and prioritizing key investments in technology and new capabilities.

“The goal of our new defense strategy is to help shape the force of the 21st century,” the secretary said, “to ... adapt our forces and operating concepts so that we are better prepared for an unpredictable and dangerous future, even in an era of constrained resources.”

Panetta said the strategy has taken root over 2012, even as the department ended combat operations in Iraq, supported the NATO-led mission in Libya and transitioned more of Afghanistan to Afghan-led security efforts.

But 2012’s multiple missions offer a clue to the first risk Panetta identified. As he noted, the nation’s military force “is still operating at a very high tempo more than 11 years after September 11th.”

For example, the U.S. military remains “at war in Afghanistan,” the secretary said, adding that U.S. forces “have been on a crisis posture in the Middle East and North Africa for the past year. And we will continue to maintain a strong presence in that region even as we rebalance to the Asia Pacific area.”

DOD’s “outstanding men and women in uniform,” the secretary said, “are the foundation of everything we do. ... We need to ensure that service members and their families have the support that they have earned in areas like health and education and employment ... so that they can ... go back home and re-establish their ties to their communities.”

The second risk, which looms 15 days away, is that the sequestration mechanism built into the Budget Control Act will take effect. If Congress and the president don’t agree on a plan to reduce the federal deficit before Jan. 2, 2013, sequestration will trigger across-the-board cuts in federal spending, including an additional \$500 billion cut in defense.

“For more than a year, this department has been operating under the shadow of sequestration,” Panetta said. “... Because of political gridlock, this department still faces the possibility of another round of across-the-board cuts ... that will inflict lasting damage on our national defense and hurt the very men and women who protect this country.”

The secretary noted that he is asked about sequestration every time he speaks to troops. “It is unacceptable to me that men and women who put their lives on the line every day in distant lands have to worry about whether those here in Washington can effectively support them,” he added.

Panetta said the Defense Department is “down to the wire now,” and that Congress must act to avoid “the fiscal disaster that awaits us.”

Failure to reach a bipartisan consensus on deficit reduction and future defense spending, the secretary warned, “will weaken this nation in the minds of our allies, our partners, and our potential adversaries and undermine the work and the sacrifices that our troops are making every single day.”

Biographies:

[Leon E. Panetta](#)

Related Sites:

[Transcript](#)

2. Dempsey Discusses North Korea, U.S. Strategic Rebalance (12-15-2012)

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr.
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 15, 2012 – The decision by North Korea to conduct another missile launch is unfortunate and counterproductive to stability in the region, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said today.

Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey took a moment during his travel on his annual USO holiday tour for a one-on-one interview with American Forces Press Service to discuss North Korea's recent actions and the U.S. strategic rebalance to the Asia-Pacific.

“My thoughts are that the North Koreans continue to be a force of instability in a region while we're working diligently to increase stability,” Dempsey said.

“So their decision to do that missile launch was very unwise, very unfortunate and I think the international community increasingly sees them for what they are -- which is a force of instability during a time when they ought to be looking for opportunities to contribute to regional stability,” he said.

The chairman also discussed the progress made in the U.S. strategic rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region.

“Last year, we talked about our strategic interests, globally, and how they would change over time,” Dempsey said. “But that's an important point -- over time. This wasn't a light switch.”

“And so, as we thought about that rebalancing of our interests, kind of horizontally, this year we're looking at the impact of that vertically,” he said.

The chairman explained the three-part, vertical aspect of the rebalancing, “which is to say how much of our force structure is forward, how much is rotational and how much is retained in the homeland to provide surge capability for security issues that we may not anticipate.”

Asked of the “gains” seen in this strategic pivot, Dempsey described what he perceives as a gain, although he said he doesn't necessarily view the rebalancing in terms of “losses and gains.”

“When you use the term 'gains,' I would say the single biggest gain is we've got this, I think, pretty coherent vision of how our security will be shaped between now and the year 2020,” he said. “This is the first step and that's a significant step.”

Over the course of the next three or four years, “we've got to put into place a system, processes, resources and the intellectual energy to deliver,” Dempsey said.

Biographies:

[Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey](#)

Related Sites:

[Travels with Dempsey](#)

3. United Arab Emirates Hosts World Center to Fight Extremism (12-14-2012)

By Phillip Kurata
Staff Writer

Washington — The United Arab Emirates, with the backing of the United States, has launched the first international institution aimed at countering violent extremism.

Deputy Secretary of State William Burns said at the launch ceremony in Abu Dhabi December 14 that the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism will fight extremism by fostering opportunity, promoting tolerance and reaching out to people who have been victims of terrorism.

“We all know that repressive approaches often fuel the very radicalization they seek to fight,” Burns said. “We need to build governments’ capacities to take on threats within their societies through approaches grounded in the rule of law and respect for human rights — by reforming law enforcement and criminal justice systems, engaging with local communities and empowering civil society.”

UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan said, “Extremism is the opposite of tolerance, which is embraced by the UAE as one of its key values. It is an honor for the UAE to coordinate efforts with the international community to eliminate terrorist and extremist threats in the world.”

In 2013, the United States will sponsor a second facility aimed at countering terrorism, the International Institute of Justice and the Rule of Law, in Tunis, Tunisia. Burns said the institute in Tunis will help investigators, prosecutors and others develop rule-of-law tools to prevent and respond to terrorism.

“We hope these facilities will educate a new generation of criminal justice officials who will themselves go on to change mind-sets within their own institutions,” Burns said.

The deputy secretary said the world is at a pivotal point in the fight against terrorism. He said al-Qaida is finding it more difficult to raise money, train recruits and plan attacks outside the region. International pressure and national leadership have marginalized al-Qaida affiliates in Yemen and Somalia.

Despite those successes, terrorist groups are advancing their agendas in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa regions.

“For some time, al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb has launched attacks and kidnappings from northern Mali into neighboring countries. As violent extremists carve out a larger safe haven, they seek to extend their reach and networks in multiple directions,” Burns said.

The deputy secretary said the Sahel Working Group has brought together experts from across the region to focus on border security and improving criminal justice procedures.

While in the UAE, Burns helped launch a program to help victims of terrorism and offer the first set of international best practices aimed at ending kidnapping for ransom.

[Deputy Secretary Burns at Global Counterterrorism Forum](#)
[Fact Sheet: Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism](#)
[Co-Chairs Fact Sheet: Global Counterterrorism Forum Deliverables](#)
[Co-Chairs Fact Sheet: About the Global Counterterrorism Forum](#)

4. Declaration by G8 Broader Mideast and North Africa Initiative (12-14-2012)

The following is a December 14 joint declaration adopted by participants in the G8 Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative at the 9th Forum for the Future.

G8 Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Initiative

9th Forum for the Future Final Declaration

1. The 9th Forum for the Future, co-chaired by Tunisia and the United States, was convened in Tunis during the period of 11-13 December 2012 with the broad participation of Foreign Ministers and other government representatives of the G8, BMENA, and other partner countries; civil society and private sector representatives; and participants from international organizations. Their efforts, and this Declaration, build upon the foundation established by previous Forums and in particular upon the Declaration from the 8th Forum for the Future in Kuwait.
2. Ministers expressed their thanks to Tunisia and the United States for co-chairing the 2012 BMENA process, including hosting the Forum for the Future and organizing its preparatory work through two civil society workshops and a Sub-Ministerial meeting in cooperation with their NGO partners, the League of Women Voters, the Human Resources and Training Managers Association, and the Tunisian American Chamber of Commerce. They also thanked Morocco and Jordan for supporting the two preparatory workshops in El Jadida and Amman. Participants welcomed the preparatory events, which fostered collaborative discussions among governments, civil society, and the private sector regarding concrete actions to advance women's empowerment, the rights to freedom of expression and association, and economic governance and entrepreneurship, in accordance with national efforts and actions of partners to support them.
3. Since the 8th Forum for the Future in Kuwait, the BMENA region has witnessed important progress and promise. Ministers welcomed the transfer of executive authority to newly democratic elected governments in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia through credible and transparent elections that reflected the will of the people, a newly elected President and plans for a new constitution and full elections in Yemen, and the comprehensive constitutional changes in Morocco resulting in a democratically elected government. However, the past year was also marked by challenges and crises. Ministers expressed serious concern about the unrelenting violence, massacres, and human rights violations perpetrated against the Syrian people that followed the regime crackdown on peaceful protests beginning in March 2011 and that should be stopped immediately. They also expressed serious concern about the human rights situation in Iran and called on the Government of Iran to fully abide by its international obligations in this regard.
4. Recent developments in the region have underscored that governments, the G8 countries, civil society, the private sector, and multilateral partners all must expand their collaboration to

meet the region's challenges; promote economic growth and stability; reject violence; advance women's full participation in society; achieve sustained progress on economic, political, and social concerns; and advance the values of democracy, human rights, and participation of all citizens in political and public affairs. The long-standing focus of the BMENA Initiative on government-citizen dialogue has never been more relevant or necessary in the region.

5. Consistent with this focus, Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to nationally-based dialogues between governments and their citizens. While each country determines its own form of dialogue, Ministers agreed to strengthen the respect for the rights to peacefully assemble, to associate, and to express oneself freely in accordance with their commitments to universally recognized human rights. They agreed on the need to foster meaningful avenues for all to communicate their interests and concerns to their governments and to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. Ministers agreed on the importance of supporting civil society at this crucial juncture in the history of the region and expressed support for establishing, or strengthening existing, regular and routine national mechanisms for government and civil society dialogue, promoting inclusivity and transparency in political processes, and basic freedoms for all. Ministers acknowledged the importance of sound national legal frameworks that are consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law and that support a vibrant and unfettered civil society and the enjoyment of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. Ministers affirmed the importance of the continuation of informal dialogue, which has developed within and outside the Forum, including between representatives of civil society, as it provides an important opportunity to exchange views in a constructive environment that builds confidence. They expressed the view that work undertaken within the Forum for the Future will, as much as possible, be reflected at national and international levels, and they reaffirmed their joint understanding of pursuing economic, political, and social development.
6. Ministers reaffirmed the importance of respecting the rule of law, rejecting violence, and protecting all persons living within their territory without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion, and protecting diplomatic missions and personnel. Ministers expressed concern that incidents of racial and religious intolerance, discrimination, and related violence, as well as of negative racial and religious stereotyping, continue to rise around the world, and condemned any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence. Ministers affirmed that violence in response to speech is never acceptable; stressed the need for States to take positive concrete steps to combat intolerance, negative stereotyping, discrimination, and incitement to violence such as encouraging political leaders and civil society to speak out against intolerance, creating networks to build mutual understanding, training government officials in effective outreach, and encouraging representation of individuals irrespective of their religion in all sectors of society; and reaffirmed their commitment to promote tolerance and pluralism, to uphold the rule of law, and to protect freedom of religion and belief. They further reaffirmed the positive role that the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the full respect for the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information can play in strengthening democracy and combating intolerance. Ministers acknowledged important steps that have been taken toward these goals since the last Forum, but expressed the continued need for further progress.
7. Ministers agreed that the full and equal participation of all people regardless of race, sex, or religion is critical for political and economic development. Ministers, in particular,

recognized the critical role that women play in the transformations underway in the BMENA region, and underscored the importance of progress on long-standing BMENA objectives related to gender equality, with a view to achieving women's full political, social, and economic empowerment. New legislation and electoral procedures in the past year have led to increased women's political representation and participation in several BMENA countries, which Ministers recognized as an important step. They also reaffirmed the ongoing need for further progress in addressing a range of issues affecting the condition of women throughout the countries participating in the Forum, including gender-based discrimination and violence; forced and early forced marriage; low rates of women's participation in economies, public service, and decision-making institutions including parliaments; and barriers to women's access to education. Ministers welcomed the commitment by several BMENA countries to advance the opportunities for women to the benefit of their societies as a whole. Important examples include establishing new or reinforcing existing legal and constitutional frameworks that guarantee women's equality and support women's increased political representation and economic participation, including through the provision of guarantees for equal opportunities or the use of preferences in the public and private sector when appropriate; expanding women's economic opportunities through education, training, including vocational training, mentorship, and other support; combating all forms of violence against women; and increasing education and awareness of human rights with a particular focus on women. Ministers welcomed in principle the call by the Government of Tunisia for the creation of a regional network of shelters and research center for women victims of violence. Ministers also acknowledged the importance of integrating international commitments into their national laws, including comprehensive national family policies to encourage women's participation in public life.

8. Ministers agreed on the urgent need for increased economic opportunity, job creation, and broad-based, private sector-led growth in the region that focuses in particular on youth and women, who are overrepresented among the unemployed population. They also acknowledged the inter-linkages between domestic and global economic governance and the implications of the latter on the BMENA economic reform agenda. Ministers noted the importance of domestic-led reform efforts in collaboration with the private sector, civil society, and international organizations, including international financial institutions, to improve the business climate, facilitate public-private partnerships, and foster an environment conducive to entrepreneurship and business development for all citizens. Ministers cited as necessary goals greater openness and transparency in economic decision-making; the establishment of fair, clear, and efficient legal and regulatory environments for business; effective whistle-blower protection laws; establishment of independent accountability institutions; e-commerce; and an active, independent, professional, and free media in ensuring the transparency and integrity of public institutions. Ministers welcomed the commitments that a number of Governments had undertaken in these areas, including by streamlining the business registration process, reforming commercial codes, creating dedicated support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), establishing independent accountability institutions, and increasing access to capital. They took note of the best practice, implemented by a number of countries, of public-private entities facilitating discussion of and informing decision-making on economic and business matters, and the private sector's recommendation to support the establishment and development of public-private SME institutions to provide support for entrepreneurs and SMEs, including entrepreneurship education, apprenticeship and vocational programs, debt and equity funding, banking services, innovation and knowledge-transfer, mentorship, incubation, and government procurement preference mechanisms.

9. Ministers welcomed the important work being undertaken under the Deauville Partnership with Arab Countries in Transition in promoting SME development, open government and anticorruption, and asset recovery, and expressed their appreciation for the contributions of the regional partners. They noted the development by Deauville countries of plans for near-term actions that will bolster the development and sustainability of entrepreneurial activity and SMEs, and encouraged countries to share and publish their near-term action plans, and to work with partner governments and institutions, including international financial institutions, in support of their implementation. Ministers welcomed the cooperation between the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, which is managing the SME initiative of the Emir of Kuwait and the World Bank, as trustee of the Deauville Transition Fund, to further investments in SMEs across the region. Ministers also acknowledged the need to improve practices in public financial management, and recognized the potential for technical assistance rendered through the Deauville Partnership's Transition Fund and Financial Services Advisory Corps. They stressed the importance of ensuring increased synergy and complementarity between BMENA and the Deauville Partnership as two distinct and mutually reinforcing work streams and emphasized the importance of the G8's support regarding ongoing reforms in the region. In this context, they welcomed the United Kingdom's intention in 2013 to prioritize asset recovery, women's participation and support for SMEs as part of their presidency of the Deauville Partnership.
10. Ministers affirmed their resolve to make fighting corruption a priority at all levels and called for continued cooperation to pursue effective asset recovery, including through follow-up action on the elements of the Asset Recovery resolution of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) 4th Conference of States Parties in Marrakesh. They called upon both requested and requesting States to work together in accordance with their obligations under Chapters IV and V of UNCAC to act together to recover the proceeds of corruption and other illicit financial outflows, and to take a proactive approach to international cooperation in asset recovery. Ministers noted with appreciation the Stolen Assets Recovery Initiative of the World Bank Group and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Ministers also welcomed the Asset Recovery Action Plan of the Deauville Partnership, including the Arab Forum on Asset Recovery in Doha September 11-13, 2012, and encouraged further progress on its elements and further coordination among existing initiatives, in order to enhance case cooperation to trace, freeze, confiscate, and return proceeds of corruption, strengthen legislative frameworks, simplify processes to facilitate this progress, and foster capacity building, in accordance with the principles of the rule of law and judicial independence.
11. Ministers took note of U.N. General Assembly resolution 67/19 regarding Palestinian status as an observer state. At the same time while dealing with the aspirations of the peoples of the region, the Ministers reaffirmed their support for the efforts to achieve a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the Middle East through negotiations within a specific timeframe and clear terms of reference based on the two-state solution as stated in the Arab Peace Initiative, the Road Map, the Madrid principles, on the basis of land for peace, the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and the Quartet Statement of 23 September 2011 leading to the establishment of an independent, contiguous, viable, sovereign, democratic, peaceful state of Palestine, living side by side with Israel in peace and security.
12. Ministers welcomed the announcement at the Forum of several new initiatives to support civil society, women's empowerment, and the private sector in the BMENA region, including Milan's Chamber of Commerce Euro-Med Center for the Development of Medium, Small, Micro Enterprises. They welcomed the information offered by some

BMENA countries on their national plans and priorities to advance women's empowerment, freedom of expression and association, and economic governance and entrepreneurship, and noted that such information provided a means for governments, regional and multilateral institutions, and civil society to focus their efforts and assistance. In this context, Ministers reaffirmed the importance of full implementation of the Paris Declaration, Accra Agenda for Action, and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. Ministers welcomed in principle the proposal by the Government of Tunisia for a regional Women's Enterprise Fund.

13. Ministers expressed their sincere thanks to the Government of Tunisia and the Tunisian people for their warm reception and hospitality in hosting the 9th Forum for the Future, which ensured the event's success. They also expressed their support for the next joint chairmanship of the United Kingdom and Egypt.

[Fact Sheet: G8-BMENA Forum for the Future](#)

5. Panetta Signs Order to Deploy 400 U.S. Personnel to Turkey (12-14-2012)

By Cheryl Pellerin
American Forces Press Service

INCIRLIK AIR BASE, Turkey, Dec. 14, 2012 – Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta has signed an order that will deploy 400 U.S. personnel to Turkey to support the deployment that NATO agreed to recently of Patriot missile capability there, Pentagon Press Secretary George Little said today.

Panetta signed the agreement en route to Turkey as he wrapped up a trip this week that included time in Kuwait and Afghanistan with civilian and military leaders.

He visited the troops to thank them for their dedication and sacrifice, and for spending another holiday season away from family and friends.

While in Kabul the secretary also met with Marine Corps Gen. John R. Allen, commander of the International Security Assistance Force, ISAF regional commanders and Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

“The United States has been supporting Turkey in its efforts to defend itself,” Little said. “NATO has recently offered up Patriot missile battery capability to Turkey, which is a very strong ally of the United States.”

Little said he expects the troops to be deployed in the coming weeks.

“I’m not going to go into precise locations at this time, he added, “but I wanted to let you ... know that we signed that order and that we are prepared in the context of NATO to support the defense of Turkey for an unspecified period of time.”

The personnel will deploy to Turkey to operate two U.S. Patriot missile batteries once they are in place, he said.

“The purpose of this deployment is to signal very strongly that the United States, working closely with our NATO allies, is going to support the defense of Turkey, especially with potential threats emanating from Syria,” Little said.

Incirlik Air Base is an installation of U.S. Air Forces in Europe, a major command of the U.S. Air Force and the air component of the U.S. European Command, a DOD unified command.

“Turkey also is a key NATO ally and we have a lot of U.S. forces stationed there to enhance our strong defense cooperation,” Panetta told reporters traveling with him as the trip began.

“Both the United States and Turkey share common concerns now about the violence in Syria and the threat that it poses to regional stability, he added.

Panetta said DOD has been working closely with Turkey on humanitarian issues, chemical and biological weapons issues, and missile defense.

“I’m pleased that last week NATO pledged to deploy missile defense systems to protect Turkey, and we will participate in that effort as well,” the secretary said.

Panetta said the United States and Turkey are committed to work together to strengthen defense systems and to put pressure on the Assad regime in neighboring Syria to end the violence in that country and help develop the political transition that must take place there.

Biographies:

[Leon E. Panetta](#)

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Travels With Panetta](#)

[Incirlik Air Base](#)

6. United States Will Back Arab Democracy on Multiple Fronts (12-13-2012)

By Phillip Kurata
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States will work with elected leaders in emerging Arab democracies regardless of their political origins provided they pursue inclusive, pluralistic policies, Deputy Secretary of State William Burns says.

“When it comes to building sustainable democracies, the most consequential distinction is not between Islamists and secularists, but between those who embrace a rights-respecting pluralistic approach and those who seek to impose their own will,” Burns said in speech to the Forum for the Future in Tunis, Tunisia, December 13.

The deputy secretary said the United States supports democratic transitions and political reform not only out of idealism but also out of strategic necessity. “Representative government, open economies, rights and protections and vibrant civil society are essential building blocks of successful societies,” he said.

The Forum for the Future is an annual gathering of the foreign ministers from the G8 and Middle Eastern and North African countries along with representatives from civil society and private sector groups.

The 2012 forum, co-hosted by Tunisia and the United States December 12 and 13, focused on three themes: women's empowerment, economic governance and entrepreneurship, and freedom of expression and association.

Commenting on the turmoil in Egypt, Burns said Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, as his country's first democratically elected leader, "has a particular responsibility to work to build greater consensus on such important issues as the constitution.

"The future of Egyptian democracy depends not on the ability of one side to prevail over another, but on the commitment of all to engage in an inclusive process to negotiate their differences — one that may not resolve every disagreement," he said.

The deputy secretary said the Tunisian revolution remains full of promise even as it faces challenges.

"Strikes, riots, and the same economic grind that led to a street vendor's desperate act all speak to the work ahead. But America still believes Tunisia can and must be a model for the rest of the region. And we will stand with Tunisians as they deal with the interlocking challenges of transforming its political system, protecting its people and developing its economy," Burns said.

Economic opportunity is an important ingredient to stabilizing the budding democracies in the region, Burns said. To that end, the United States provided \$549 million in 2012 to support economic governance and entrepreneurship. Burns proposed the creation of the Middle East/North Africa Partnership for Democracy and Development and said the United States is prepared to fund the startup costs for that partnership. He also announced a special program to help Arab women succeed in business — the Arab Women's Entrepreneurship Alliance.

"Conventional assistance, no matter how generous, will not be enough," he said. He called for more creative and ambitious thinking to open up trade and investment across the region and "ensure the Arab awakening is also an economic awakening."

To facilitate peaceful dissent, another pillar of democracy, Burns said police need training to help them respect peaceful protests. "The inescapable lesson of the past two years is that security requires more than military might and must be pursued without committing human rights violations that create new grievances," Burns said.

In the coming year, Burns said, the United States will launch new programs to support journalists and civil society groups.

The Journalist Response Fund will provide training to at-risk journalists, bloggers, and citizen journalists and offer assistance to journalists facing difficulties or repression. The Freedom of Association Index, comparable to the World Bank's ease of doing business report, will measure and track the ease of forming and operating civil society groups.

"We support the development of civil society, media, and political parties, with an emphasis on youth, women, and marginalized groups," he said.

7. Panetta Outlines U.S. Military's Transformation (12-13-2012)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said the U.S. military is transforming into a smaller but more flexible and technologically advanced force as it transitions from years of continuous operation in Iraq and Afghanistan and looks ahead to troop reductions and smaller budgets.

In remarks to U.S. military personnel at Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait on December 12, Panetta said the United States is at a turning point more than 10 years after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which U.S. combat forces plan to leave before the end of 2014.

The past decade has been “the longest ... continuous period of warfare in the history of this country,” he said. Along with the transition from a period of war, U.S. lawmakers have instructed the U.S. military to reduce its budget by \$487 billion over the next 10 years.

Panetta said there will be some gradual reductions in the number of U.S. military personnel over the next five to 10 years, and the Defense Department will be looking into ways to increase its bureaucratic efficiency and to save money in procuring weapons and other needs.

But the secretary said that even with a reduced size and budget, the United States “will remain the strongest military power in the world,” and it will retain the capability to “defeat more than one enemy at a time. “

In the new U.S. defense strategy, “we have to be agile. We have to be flexible. We have to be quickly deployable. We’ve got to be able to move fast, and we’ve got to be on the cutting edge of technology,” he said.

“Even as we draw down after these many years of war, we still confront real threats in today's world,” Panetta said.

The United States will maintain a strong force projection in both the Asia-Pacific region and the Middle East in response to security challenges from North Korea and Iran and continued turmoil in the Middle East region, he said.

There will also be a rotational U.S. presence in Latin America, Africa and Europe that Panetta said is designed to help other countries develop their own military competency.

“We'll have people that will go in, help train, exercise with other countries, develop their capabilities, build new alliances, build new partnerships in order to provide security in other parts of the world,” he said.

Panetta said the United States will also need to deal with the threat of cyberwarfare, as more countries and individuals develop the capability of deploying tools over the Internet that can take down systems controlling power grids, finances, government operations and other critical services.

“The war of the future is going to involve cyberwar. That's a reality,” he said.

“Every day, there are literally hundreds of thousands of attacks that are taking place. Now, a lot of this is exploitive. They basically go into systems. They try to get information. They try to see what's going on — not only government systems, but private-sector systems,” he said.

The secretary urged better cooperation between the government and the private sector in sharing information about attacks.

“What we have to do is ensure that we can defend against those kinds of attacks and, if necessary, be able to go back at those that would attempt to come at us,” Panetta said.

8. U.S. Recognizes Syrian Opposition, Pledges More Aid (12-12-2012)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States has recognized the Syrian Opposition Council as “the legitimate representative of the Syrian people” in opposition to the regime of Bashar al-Assad, and it is providing an additional \$14 million in humanitarian assistance to help Syrians get emergency medical care and to prepare for the coming winter.

In remarks to ABC News December 11, President Obama said Syria’s opposition coalition “is now inclusive enough, is reflective and representative enough of the Syrian population” to be recognized as their representative.

“With that recognition comes responsibilities to make sure that they organize themselves effectively, that they are representative of all the parties, that they commit themselves to a political transition that respects women’s rights and minority rights,” Obama said.

Deputy Secretary of State William Burns is representing the United States at the Friends of the Syrian People meeting in Marrakesh, Morocco. He said December 12 that the Obama administration’s recognition of the council marks “an important step forward.”

Burns said the United States has invited Syrian opposition leader Moaz al-Khatib to visit Washington “at the earliest opportunity,” and he urged the Syrian opposition to create more formal structures for itself and to accelerate its planning for a democratic transition in Syria that will protect the rights, dignity and aspirations of all of its people.

“That means taking concrete steps to include women and minorities, engage with religious leaders and civil society, and discourage reprisals and inter-communal violence,” he said.

Burns said the United States will support the Syrian opposition’s efforts through a \$50 million contribution aimed at helping civil society and civilian opposition groups “communicate, organize, and evade regime attacks,” as well as give direct support to local Syrian councils as they begin to provide basic services and governance.

The Syrian opposition needs to stand firm against extremists who would hijack the Syrian resistance for their own ends or sow division among Syria’s many ethnic and religious communities, Burns said.

“Human rights abuses cannot be tolerated, no matter who commits them. They will only weaken the Syria you hope to inherit,” he told the Friends of the Syrian People meeting.

With many Syrians expressing strong support for the coalition’s vision, the task is now to “make that vision real,” and to offer “a true alternative” to the Assad regime that is “democratic and inclusive rather than dictatorial and divisive,” he said.

The United States is supporting U.N. and Arab League Joint Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi’s diplomatic efforts to end the crisis, and it has been intensively engaged with him, Russian diplomats and other partners to help bring about a political transition, including a governing body “formed on the basis of mutual consent, which would exercise full executive power,” he said.

Burns announced that the Obama administration is providing an additional \$14 million in humanitarian assistance that is focused on providing emergency medical care and helping Syrians prepare for winter.

“This includes essential medicines and surgical supplies, special nutritional supplements for 225,000 hungry children and everything from heavy-duty plastic insulation to blankets and boots for thousands of families,” he said.

With the additional \$14 million, the total U.S. humanitarian assistance to Syria stands at more than \$210 million, which Burns said is reaching more than 1.5 million Syrians inside and outside of the country.

Burns said the Assad regime’s hold on power is weakening by the day and it is losing control of territory, while the opposition is becoming more unified and better organized.

A transition is coming “one way or another,” and the sooner Assad steps aside, “the better for all Syrians,” he said.

[Remarks by Deputy Secretary William J. Burns to the Friends of the Syrian People](#) (12-12-2012)
[Press Availability at the 4th Ministerial of the Friends of the Syrian People Meeting](#) (12-12-2012)
[U.S. Provides Additional Humanitarian Assistance for the Syrian Crisis](#) (12-12-2012)
