

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
July 18 - 24, 2013

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1. [Dempsey Arrives in Poland Following Afghan Meetings \(07-23-2013\)](#)

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WARSAW, Poland, July 23, 2013 – Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, arrived here today following a successful trip to Afghanistan.

Army Lt. Gen. Mieczyslaw Gocul, the chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, met Dempsey at the plane.

Dempsey will meet with Polish leaders today and will visit with American airmen training with Poland's armed forces tomorrow.

The chairman presented Gocul with a photo taken yesterday, when he met with Polish members of the International Security Assistance Force in the Afghan capital of Kabul.

In Kabul, Dempsey met with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, with whom he discussed the bilateral security agreement between the United States and Afghanistan. The talks were productive, with the Afghan president's office issuing a statement following the meeting. "Afghans are ready to sign a security pact with the U.S., on the condition that it leads to peace and stability in the country, the strengthening of Afghan forces, and a united and sovereign Afghanistan," the statement said.

Karzai had broken off talks with the United States on the issue.

Dempsey told a media roundtable at ISAF headquarters that he would like to see the pact signed before October. NATO and partner nations then will negotiate a similar pact with the Afghans. The

agreement will govern how the U.S. operates in Afghanistan once the ISAF mandate expires at the end of 2014.

The follow-on agreement would continue the development of Afghan security forces. Dempsey called those forces “the best guarantor of future security in Afghanistan.”

NATO has named the follow-on operation Resolute Support.

Biographies:

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

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Travels With Dempsey](#)

2. Carter, Israeli Leaders Reaffirm Defense Relationship (07-22-2013)

By Cheryl Pellerin

American Forces Press Service

TEL AVIV, Israel, July 22, 2013 – During Deputy Defense Secretary Ash Carter’s first official trip to Israel, he and senior security officials here reaffirmed that the U.S.-Israeli defense relationship has never been stronger and agreed to continuing close consultations on shared security interests.

Carter’s visit this week, made to discuss a range of issues of mutual importance -- including the unfolding situations in Syria and Iran -- comes a month after Israeli Defense Minister Moshe “Boogie” Yaalon’s June visit to Washington, where he met with Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel. Hagel visited Israel in April.

The deputy secretary also met with Ya’alon, Israeli National Security Adviser Yaakov Amidror and other senior officials. Director-General of the Ministry of Defense Udi Shani hosted an official dinner for Carter.

As part of the visit, Carter took a helicopter tour of some of Israel’s security challenges, and received briefings and observed demonstrations of tactical capabilities in several areas near Tel Aviv, including the Mitkan Adam Army Base, an Israel Defense Force special training installation.

Among the elite training schools at the installation are the IDF Counterterrorism Warfare School, the IDF Snipers School, and the IDF Canine Unit, or Oketz Unit, whose logo is a winged dog head. The dogs of the unit are the special operations equivalents of canine assistants -- they climb, they crawl, they tiptoe across logs, they even fast-rope down from heights with their handlers, making no sound at all.

Israeli ground forces discussed their use of canine partners in a range of operations -- finding roadside bombs, hidden adversaries, and contraband smuggled in all kinds of vehicles -- and in performing many other kinds of jobs.

A couple of miles away, next to a rocky, shrub-covered hill, the sun beat down on a two-story building. Nearby is a narrow wooden structure built only for fast-roping. This remote part of Camp Adam has been scene of many canine and special operations training operations, and yesterday afternoon Carter watched as they showed him how they like to work.

Afterward, Carter spoke briefly to the troops before shaking their hands and presenting them with commemorative coins from his office.

“Protecting America means protecting Israel, and that’s why we’re here in the first place,” he said. “But this is the fun part,” he added, indicating the tactical demonstration area and the fit, skilled men and women in uniform, some with their dogs and some still dressed in garb that disguised them as boulders and bushes.

Biographies:

[Ash Carter](#)

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Travels with Carter](#)

[3. U.S.-Afghan Pact Possible by October, Dempsey Says \(07-22-2013\)](#)

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

KABUL, Afghanistan, July 22, 2013 – The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff came away from a meeting with Afghan President Hamid Karzai today convinced that the United States and Afghanistan can sign a bilateral security agreement between now and October.

Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey gave his assessment during a roundtable with Western and Afghan media at the International Security Assistance Force headquarters here.

“I can tell you with great candor and integrity that the conversation today with the president was very positive, and I left convinced that he is as committed as we are to moving ahead with this bilateral security agreement as soon as possible,” Dempsey said.

Getting the agreement signed by October fits in with his best military advice, the chairman stressed. The agreement would put in place the framework for the continuing U.S. and NATO effort in the country after Dec. 31, 2014, when the current NATO mandate expires.

“We would like to have the enduring framework in place by October 2014 so there would be about 90 days before the current mandate ends and a new NATO operation called Resolute Support begins,” Dempsey said.

October 2013 is a year ahead of this, and “militarily, my advice is we should try to achieve as much clarity and certainty as possible about a year out from when we want to be set in that configuration,” he added.

The agreement would reflect America’s continued commitment to the development of the Afghan security forces beyond 2014. Dempsey said an agreement soon would build on the momentum generated by Milestone 2013, which put Afghan forces in the lead for security across the country.

Dempsey said he assured Karzai that the U.S. motivation for the agreement is to “continue the development of his security forces as the best guarantor of future security in Afghanistan.”

Once the U.S.-Afghanistan agreement is signed, a similar NATO agreement will follow. And these commitments from the broader coalition also important, Dempsey told reporters.

“I personally believe that the bilateral security agreement is an important factor -- maybe the critical factor -- in assuring that those commitments will be delivered,” he said.

Dempsey said he told Karzai he has a “significant level of confidence” in the Afghan security forces. The Afghan police and army have made progress, he added, but it is not irreversible. “The confidence of the security forces and the Afghan people will continue to grow, and an interruption in that progress could be a setback for the country,” he said.

Afghan reporters asked the chairman about the “zero option” idea that some in the U.S. government have floated. This would mean no American troops in Afghanistan following the end of the International Security Assistance Force mission. “I don’t recommend a zero option,” the chairman said.

But while there may be no zero option on the table, the chairman added, “there could be a zero outcome, because we can only stay here if we are invited to do so.”

“That’s why I am personally committed to doing whatever I can do to set the conditions for this bilateral security agreement,” Dempsey said.

The chairman noted he has been committed to the development of the Afghan security forces for years. “I have had a son and a daughter both serve here. ... For me, this is a family issue,” he said. “As a military leader, I will do everything in my power to assure my Afghan counterparts ... and the Afghan political leaders that we are genuinely and sincerely interested in continuing that relationship and their development.”

Biographies:

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

Related Articles:

[Dempsey Praises Afghan Campaign Plan, Meets German Commanders](#)

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Travels With Dempsey](#)

[4. Kerry's Announcement on Middle East Peace Negotiations \(07-19-2013\)](#)

Remarks by Secretary of State John Kerry
Amman, Jordan

SECRETARY KERRY: Good evening, everybody, thank you very much for your patience. I apologize for the delay. I’m just going to make a statement, and I’m not going to take any questions at this point in time.

On behalf of President Obama, I am pleased to announce that we have reached an agreement that establishes a basis for resuming direct final status negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. This is a significant and welcome step forward.

The agreement is still in the process of being formalized, so we are absolutely not going to talk about any of the elements now. Any speculation or reports you may read in the media or elsewhere or here in the press are conjecture. They are not based on fact because the people who know the facts are not talking about them. The parties have agreed that I will be the only one making further comments about this.

If everything goes as expected, Saeb Erekat and Tzipi Livni, Minister Livni, and Isaac Molho will be joining me in Washington to begin initial talks within the next week or so, and a further announcement will be made by all of us at that time.

I want to thank particularly His Majesty King Abdullah and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh, who has been really enormously helpful throughout this process. I want to thank all of them for their extraordinary hospitality to our team that has been camped here for several days, and they have helped with all of the logistics and been superb hosts and collaborators in this effort.

I also want to thank the Arab League and the committee, the joint committee – the committee with respect to the peace initiative follow-on -- who traveled here during the week and who made an important difference with their statement of support.

And then there are many, many others who have contributed, many other leaders around the world, all of whom have visited here and pushed and advocated and encouraged the notion that these talks could take place. There are too many to list, but they know who they are and we are very, very grateful. It will take their ongoing effort in order to be able to have any chance of making these talks the kind of success they ought to be.

I think all of us know that candid, private conversations are the very best way to preserve the time and the space for progress and understanding when you face difficult, complicated issues such as Middle East peace. The best way to give these negotiations a chance is to keep them private. Everyone knows that this is not easy. If it were, it would've happened a long time ago. And no one believes that the longstanding differences between the parties can be resolved overnight or just wiped away.

We know that the challenges require some very tough choices in the days ahead. Today, however, I am hopeful. I'm hopeful because of the courageous leadership shown by President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu. Both of them have chosen to make difficult choices here, and both of them were instrumental in pushing in this direction. We wouldn't be standing here tonight if they hadn't made the choices.

I'm most hopeful because of the positive steps that Israelis themselves and Palestinians are taking on the ground and the promise that those steps represent about the possibilities of the future. The path to resolution of this longstanding conflict in this critical corner of the world, that path is not about fate. It's about choices, choices that people can make. And this is not up to chance. It's up to the Israeli people and the Palestinian people and no one else.

So knowing that the road ahead will be difficult and the challenges that the parties face are daunting, we will call on everybody to act in the best of faith and push forward. The representatives of two proud people today have decided that the difficult road ahead is worth traveling and that the daunting challenges that we face are worth tackling. So they have courageously recognized that in order for Israelis and Palestinians to live together side by side in peace and security, they must begin by sitting at the table together in direct talks.

I thank those leaders. I thank all those who have worked so hard, my team especially, who have been part of this. And I look forward to seeing my friends from this region in Washington next week or very soon thereafter. Thank you very much.

5. Briefing on Biden's Trip to India, Singapore (07-19-2013)

Background conference call with senior administration officials on Vice President Biden and Dr. Jill Biden's trip to India and Singapore

MS. TROTTER: Thanks, everyone, for joining today's call. Sorry for the delay. Our hope is to provide you with a more detailed sense of the Vice President and Dr. Biden's schedules and goals during their trip next week to India and Singapore.

This call will be on background and our speakers are happy to take questions after they give some brief opening statements at the top.

We'd like to keep this call as focused on the trip as much as possible and remind everyone that there's one question per person.

And with that, I'll turn it over to our first speaker whom you can quote as a senior administration official.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you, Kingsley. What I'm going to do just for a couple of minutes is lay out top-line goals, the agenda items and schedule for the visit. And then myself and my colleagues would be happy to take your questions.

The Vice President gave a speech yesterday at George Washington in which he laid out our vision for moving forward with the Asia-Pacific rebalance policy that the President has announced and that the entire national security team is invested in. And the trip to India and Singapore comes in the context of that strategy.

The goal -- the overarching goal being to tie together the nations of the Asia-Pacific from India to the western shores of the Americas through strong partnerships, institutions, alliances, and rules of the road; and part of the message that the Vice President is sending in going on this trip is that we remain all in on the rebalance.

India is obviously a key player and increasingly so in the Asia-Pacific region. And the United States and India have an increasingly important bilateral relationship as our countries grow and deepen the ties across an incredibly broad range of areas.

Four areas in particular are going to be at the top of the agenda when the Vice President visits India. The first will be our economic cooperation where the Vice President will focus on issues from investment policy to intellectual property and speak to how we can work together to close the gap between where we are today and where we can be in our bilateral trade and investment and in our cooperation in multilateral trade and investment fora.

The second area is energy and climate where the Vice President will speak to the work that we need to do together to realize the promise of the civil nuclear agreement, and the work that we should be doing together to lead -- to be leaders on addressing the global challenge of climate change, building on the climate change dialogue that Secretary Kerry announced with the Indian Foreign Minister at the strategic dialogue (inaudible) month.

The third area is defense cooperation. We've built a strong foundation in defense cooperation and defense sales over the past few years, and the Vice President will come to talk about how we can build an even stronger edifice and deeper cooperation going forward.

And the fourth area is the wide range of regional cooperation that the United States and India have embarked upon, both in South Asia and in East Asia relating to maritime security, to

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counterterrorism, to our work together in the institutions of the Asia-Pacific. And that will be a full and formidable agenda given all the regional issues at play in the current international climate.

To go through the schedule in India, the Vice President will arrive in Delhi on July 22nd and upon arrival will pay a visit to the Gandhi Smirti Museum with the goal of showing his respect both to Gandhi and to India's modern history.

On July 23rd, Tuesday, he will meet with Vice President Ansari, with Sushma Swaraj of the BJP, with Prime Minister Singh, with President Mukherjee, and then he will attend a dinner hosted by Vice President Ansari, along with an array of Indian officials and folks from the private sector.

He will then travel to Mumbai where on Wednesday the 24th, he'll deliver a policy speech at the Bombay Stock Exchange and hold a roundtable with business leaders.

And then on the 25th, Thursday, he'll hold a women's empowerment event at the India Institute of Technology in Mumbai before departing for Singapore.

And Singapore is a crucial Southeast Asian partner of ours, a major trading partner, a major investment destination, an incredibly important partner with us in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and he will arrive there while there is an ongoing round of negotiations for the TPP and have the chance to consult on that.

They are a longstanding and increasingly important security partner as well, and he will have the opportunity to visit our littoral combat ship at the Changi Naval Base. And they are a country with key perspectives and a key role to play in all of the major regional issues that we are confronting today, including issues related to maritime security in the South China Sea. And on that issue, the Vice President looks forward to consult (inaudible) leaders and to having the opportunity to speak publicly to how we can manage maritime disputes, deal with issues related to freedom of navigation and unimpeded lawful commerce.

In Singapore, he arrives on July 25th, and on Friday the 26th, he will meet with President Tan. He will meet with Prime Minister Lee, with whom he will give press remarks. He will meet with Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew. And then on Saturday, he will do an economy and trade event at the Pratt & Whitney aircraft engine overhaul facility. And then, as I mentioned, a visit to the LCS ship USS Freedom and make remarks to sailors before returning back to the United States.

Just before I touch on Dr. Biden's schedule, I would note that the Vice President sees not just parallels between but interconnections between the elevated engagement the United States is pursuing here in our own hemisphere and the rebalance in the Asia-Pacific. It is a fact that five of the negotiating partners in the TPP are Western Hemisphere nations, and increasingly, key nations of the Americas are looking west for trade, investment and other forms of interaction and engagement in the Asia-Pacific region. So the Vice President views all of this as of a piece and deeply interconnected.

Dr. Biden, very quickly, in new Delhi will be doing a health and nutrition event in Kachhupura community in Agra, as well as touring the Taj Mahal. In Mumbai, she'll be doing a health and nutrition event in the Thane district, a gender-based violence event at DILASA in the Bhabha hospital to learn how this one-stop crisis center is using global best practices to serve victims of gender-based violence. And she'll be doing a girls education event at the Anjuman-il-Islam school for girls, stopping by an English class, taking a tour, and then giving brief remarks at an assembly about the importance of education and the opportunities that education can provide to these young girls.

In Singapore, she'll do an early education event, visiting the national library and participating in the kidsREAD Initiative, reading a book to children -- young children, four to eight year olds. And then

she will do a U.S. military family barbeque for servicemembers and their families who are stationed in Singapore to thank them for their service and to promote the initiative Joining Forces.

So with that, I will open it up to questions and invite my colleagues to help me answer them. Thank you.

Q: Can you just do a little more curtain-raiser on his policy speech? And also, what is he going to talk at the IIT, Bombay?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: With respect to the policy speech, I think you can expect the Vice President to set out an ambitious vision for the U.S.-India relationship, looking not just at the months ahead or the years ahead, but the decades ahead. And in particular, I think he will highlight all of the areas of potential -- the economic potential of our relationship.

For example, in his speech yesterday, he made the point that U.S.-India trade has reached nearly \$100 billion a year, but there's no reason it can't be five times that much. Over the last 13 years, it has quintupled and it should quintuple again.

On the issue of defense and security and regional cooperation, I think he will point out that increasingly the United States and India are coming into strategic convergence in terms of what our key interests are and how we can pursue them -- relating to maritime security and freedom of navigation; relating to issues around stability that can create regional integration and growth for all of the countries of the region; relating to strong institutions and rules of the road.

And then I think he will also talk about the values questions that connect our societies at the people-to-people level in terms of our shared democratic ideals and how we can build on that and translate that into more practical cooperation in some of the areas that I've described -- energy and climate change, all of the dimensions of our economic and security relationship.

So it will be a speech geared not towards policymakers or government officials, but towards the people of India. And it will be I think a set of observations both to the American people and the Indian people about what is possible if each of us commit to taking the steps necessary to realize our potential.

The IIT, Mumbai stop will be focused on young women and the growing potential and promise of young women in Indian society and Indian business, Indian science and technology. So he will take a tour of some facilities there and have an opportunity to do a roundtable with young women to highlight the progress that's been made and to champion further progress, and also to talk about the United States' experience with the growing participation of women in the science, technology, engineering and math fields.

Q: I just wanted to follow up on the first agenda point that you mentioned for India, which is economic cooperation. Obviously, in the past couple weeks there's been a lot of -- the U.S. has been raising a lot of concerns about the so-called localization policies in India as well as protection of intellectual property. And businesses have been pushing for some changes. I was just wondering when Vice President Biden is there in India whether you all expect or we can expect the Indian government to take any further measures that would sort of revise or roll back some of these policies that the U.S. has complained about.

I know they've already last week taken one step, which has been welcomed by the U.S. to roll back a local content requirement for telecom equipment. So I was just wondering if we can expect any further progress on that and to what extent that will be a focus on the Vice President's trip. Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, as you mentioned, we'd welcome the FDI reforms that the government of India announced this week as an important step. We look forward to continuing to work with the government to further increase American investment in India. And we'll also advance the point that international firms can play a very constructive role in developing the Indian retail sector to meet the growing needs of India's population in a way that benefits Indian farmers and consumers as well as American business.

So I think you can expect that this will be a very important agenda item and that we will raise the concerns that we have just as we will invite the Indian government to raise its concerns and its views on how we can facilitate economic opportunities for Indian companies in the U.S.

Some of the issues that we've noted recently have included our concerns about India's need to provide adequate protection of intellectual property in key sectors; the importance of a stable and predictable tax regime. And I think the Vice President will describe our view that reforms in these areas can help strengthen trade and investment ties, and more broadly, help further India's incredible growth story.

So this will be a chance to build upon all of the commercial and economic dialogues that we have going with India right now, build upon the recently held CEO forum, and the very productive engagements we had with senior Indian officials here last week, and build upon the strategic dialogue that Secretary Kerry held when he was out in India a month ago.

Q: Can we expect any sort of concrete announcements of further measures that India might take, do you think?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I would -- this is obviously a matter for the Indian government to decide the substance, content, and timing of any announcements. And we're certainly not going to ahead of them on something like that.

Q: Hi. I remember covering the Vice President at the time he was a senator, carrying the Democrats in terms of -- the reluctant Democrats, in terms of the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement. But it's been now five years since the agreement was signed, and it's been in limbo in terms of implementation, and it's totally sort of (inaudible) U.S. business and industry, and also the Indian American community that heavily lobbied for this agreement.

The Indian government has made clear that it's not going to compromise on the liability law, and this was called a transformational event in terms of U.S.-India relations. How is the Vice President, who was catalytic in terms of this agreement, going to square the circle and get this agreement going?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you. I'd like to address part of that. I would describe the circumstance in terms of the civil nuclear deal as in a place where it should be in terms of maintaining momentum going forward.

First of all, it's in a commercial space. The U.S. companies involved are in discussion with their Indian partners, and that is in a good place in terms of active commercial discussions moving forward.

There's been discussion -- and I imagine you've followed it closely -- in terms of the pre-early works agreement and commercial contracts that would precede resolution as a liability problem, which both sides recognize is an issue and is something that we're working on, on a government-to-government basis.

In terms of actions that the Indian side has taken, which indicates their willingness to move in that direction, I would include the plan that has been set aside for the project, and the reiterated

commitment from the Secretary's visit, from the Indian side, of progress impending on the commercial contracts and the pre-early works deal, which is an important component of a civil nuclear cooperation between our two countries.

Both of us regard this as a signature achievement and it's something that is very important to maintaining momentum on. We also recognize that if there are complex issues associated with this, that we need to remain intensely engaged to make progress on. And the Vice President has that firmly in his crosshairs.

Q: Hi. I am wondering what -- I understand that the Vice President met with business leaders, or a group of stakeholders ahead of this trip. And I guess I'm just wondering if you can give us some color about what he heard from them and what he told them.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Sure. He heard from them I would say suggestions and comments in two major categories -- one related, obviously, to the trade and investment relationship. And they covered a lot of the issues that I was just describing -- issues related to how to improve investment and market access in India; related to how to deal with issues relating -- dealing with innovation and intellectual property; issues related to immigration here in the United States as well. And then the second category was really more about how to broaden the engagement by the U.S. government to -- beyond the government in India to the entire range of Indian civil society, private sector stakeholders.

So they were giving him advice on meeting with Indian private sector leaders in India, engaging with Indian civil society while he's there, making stops in Mumbai at cafes and markets and other things along those lines. It was an incredibly pleasant sort of intensive, casual, free-flowing conversation. I think they were describing to him the India of 2013; the last time he was there was in 2008.

So there was a set of kind of specific points relating to trade and investment and intellectual property that they had on their minds, but I would say, a surprising amount of the conversation really turned on trying to help the Vice President think about how he could connect to the Indian people writ large, and how, in doing so, he could actually strengthen the prospects for taking this relationship forward in the months and years ahead.

Q: And if I might follow up, yesterday, the Vice President spoke fairly clearly on the situation in the South China Sea. At his event on this trip, will he be going beyond what he said yesterday? Will he have more sort of direct messages on that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think you can expect that when he is in Singapore he will address the issue of maritime disputes in the South China Sea, as well as in the East China Sea, and the United States' very deep stake in making sure that these disputes are managed in a way that promotes freedom of navigation, promotes stability, promotes conflict resolution, avoids intimidation and coercion and aggression.

In terms of specific formulas and the like, I don't want to sort of jump ahead of what he might say while he's out there. But I will say that he is concerned, and the U.S. government is concerned, about certain patterns of activity that have unfolded in these areas. And so I think you can expect that he will address this issue head on while he is there and do so maybe in even a little bit of a fuller way than he did in his speech.

But he's not going to make any bold, new pronouncements of policy. I think he will just elaborate on both the interest we have in making sure this is all handled appropriately and our strong view in the importance of getting to a code of conduct into a place where management of these disputes is more stable, more predictable, and avoids the risk of miscalculation and mistake.

Q: My question is about Afghanistan, which is likely to figure in the talks? You did not mention Afghanistan when you were setting out the agenda for the visit. What will be -- can you preview the discussions that will happen on Afghanistan, especially in lieu of differences between the two countries on talks with Taliban, et cetera? And also you mentioned immigration and the Vice President is likely to hear Indian concerns about immigration reforms here in the U.S. What will be his message to these concerns? How will he address these concerns? What will he be telling his Indian counterparts?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you. I'd like to address the Afghanistan question. From the U.S. perspective, India is an essential partner in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan and a prosperous Afghanistan. And India's role in Afghanistan has been characterized by a number of different features. One would be its important role as a development partner and in supporting economic development in Afghanistan; also supporting the institutions of the Afghan state, and in facilitating commercial investment on -- at a significant level in Afghanistan to create the conditions for peace, prosperity, and stability.

The circumstances in Afghanistan are the subject of very close consultations between our governments, and we are also, in terms of the -- you made allusion to the peace process -- it's also very clear from our perspective in our consultations with the Indians that we share the view that an Afghan-led process that results in a democratic, peaceful, and stable Afghanistan is the core outcome that we are looking for and, again, the Indian role is an important one (inaudible) India's role as a -- in contributing to regional peace and stability.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: And just to follow on that briefly before turning to immigration, the Vice President will convey the U.S.'s view that the necessary outcomes of any Afghan-led process that involves the Taliban has to be breaking with al Qaeda, renouncing violence, and abiding by the terms of the Afghan constitution. The United States has been very clear on these necessary outcomes, remains clear on them in all of our dealings, and that will be a feature of his consultations with the Indians on the peace-process question when he's in Delhi.

On immigration, I would just note that the Senate bill that has been the subject of discussion in India has provisions that will very much benefit Indian workers seeking employment in the United States. Just as an example, the bill will nearly triple the number of H-1B visas for skilled workers. And since the largest share, by a considerable amount, the largest share of H1-B holders are from India, we anticipate that expansion of this program will certainly benefit many skilled Indian workers.

In fact, because the Senate bill would so dramatically increase the ceiling on H-1Bs, many more Indian university graduates would be able to -- if this bill became law, which of course it is not yet and there are many more hoops to jump through -- but if it were to become law, many more Indian university graduates would be able to work on a temporary basis in the U.S., gaining new skills that in some cases they will bring back to India.

Now, it's true that some firms who have structured their workforce to rely heavily on H-1B employees would have to, under the terms of this bill, take another look at certain aspects of their business model. But overall, the bill and its provisions around H1-B visas would not only be good for the United States, but would be good for India as well.

MS. TROTTER: Thanks, and we have time for one more question.

Q: Hi, thank you for doing this. A few fact checks with you. Is he the first Vice President to travel to India in more than 50 years? And secondly, only Dr. Jill Biden will be going to Taj, not the Vice President? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: On the first question, I believe -- though I don't want to be absolutely held to this -- that the Vice President will be the first Vice President to travel to India since then Vice President Bush in either the late '80s or early '90s. But I am not 100 percent certain of that. I think that is the case.

I do know that Vice President Hubert Humphrey traveled there in 1966, but I think that Vice President Bush also made a trip to India when he was Vice President.

But it has certainly been a long time since an American Vice President has gone to India -- too long in the view of Vice President Biden, and that's why he's eager to make this trip. It will be his first trip since 2008 when he was a senator.

On the issue of the Taj Mahal, I regret that only Dr. Biden is going there. I say I regret because some of us will be with the Vice President while he's doing a day of intensive, serious meetings in Delhi while Dr. Biden is pursuing both cultural diplomacy and a health and nutrition event in Agra and going to the Taj Mahal.

But we view Dr. Biden's role in this visit as crucial to reflecting the broad range of our engagement between the United States and India -- across health and education, women's empowerment and so many other issues. And the message that she will send by her presence and by what she does I think will be a powerful catalyst for greater cooperation between our countries as we move forward.

Q: Thank you.

MS. TROTTER: Thanks, everyone, for joining. That's all the time that we have today, but look for more details about the Vice President and Dr. Biden's schedule to be released in the next few days.

Thanks.

6. Hagel Stresses Value of Special Operations Forces to Security (07-18-2013)

By Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Steven Fox
U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C., July 18, 2013 – Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel highlighted the value of special operations forces during a visit with Marines at the Stone Bay facility here yesterday.

The secretary told Marines and sailors of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command that MARSOC's strength lies in its seasoned Marines who are capable of dealing with developing situations in a complex operational environment.

“Special operations are going to continue to be a critical, critical component of our national security,” Hagel said. “I see a tremendous future. We can learn a lot from what special operations does. It's going to be a main piece of our national defense strategy.”

Defense Department officials said the purpose of Hagel's visit was to candidly engage with Marines and sailors here on military budget cut impacts and to gain understanding of how MARSOC plans to posture an enabled Marine Special Operations Company for current and future operations.

In meeting with service members here, the secretary expressed his appreciation to them and their families for their continued sacrifice.

“I understand that I’m the first secretary of defense to visit MARSOC, and let me just say thank you,” he said. “I try to come out to better understand my job so that I can better support you.”

Hagel also stressed that current budget realities in a dangerous world require the Defense Department to learn to do more with less.

“The last 10 or 12 years, the defense budget has been unchallenged, and those days are over,” he said. “We have to be more agile and flexible.”

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