



***WPD50020**

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
America.Gov COMPILATION SYSTEM
English (public-domain) Edition
Friday, 20 November 2009**

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Obama Tells Blogger He Wants Greater Freedom for Cubans

() (848)

By Stephen Kaufman

Staff Writer

Washington — Renowned Cuban blogger Yoani Sánchez had seven questions for President Obama related to the U.S.-Cuba relationship, the Cuban exile community in the United States, and Cuba's emerging civil society groups.

As she wrote in her blog, Generación Y, she directed separate sets of questions to President Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro because "I want to know, from my diminutive position as a citizen, how this dispute is going to play out, when will it cease to be the central theme in every aspect of our lives."

President Obama responded to the questions November 18, and praised Sánchez for her blog, saying it "provides the world a unique window into the realities of daily life in Cuba."

"It is telling that the Internet has provided you and other courageous Cuban bloggers with an outlet to express yourself so freely, and I applaud your collective efforts to empower fellow Cubans to express themselves through the use of technology," Obama said. The president has urged governments to relax Internet censorship, and recently told a Chinese audience that unrestricted access is a "source of strength." (<http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/November/20091116114511esnamfuak0.1158716.html>)

In his written answers, Obama said U.S. and Cuban authorities have held recent talks on "safe, legal and orderly migration" between the two countries and re-establishing a direct mail service.

"It is also my intent to facilitate greater contact with the Cuban people, especially among divided Cuban families, which I have done by removing U.S. restrictions on family visits and remittances," he said.

Obama described the talks on migration and direct mail service as being "small steps," but said they are "an important part of a process to move U.S.-Cuban

relations in a new and more positive direction.” The president said the Cuban government needs to take action for the two countries to enjoy “a more normal relationship.”

He said he is prepared for the United States to engage with the Cuban government on a wider range of issues, but “I am not interested ... in talking for the sake of talking.” In Cuba’s case, Obama said diplomacy “should create opportunities to advance the interests of the United States and the cause of freedom for the Cuban people.”

The Cuban government “is not the only voice that matters in Cuba,” Obama said. “We take every opportunity to interact with the full range of Cuban society and look forward to the day when the government reflects the freely expressed will of the Cuban people.”

Obama told Sánchez that the United States “has no intention of using military force in Cuba” to end the long dispute between the two countries. He expressed his hope that the Cuban government “will respond to the desire of the Cuban people to enjoy the benefits of democracy and be able to freely determine Cuba’s future.”

Asked if he would be willing to travel to Cuba, the president said, “I would never rule out a course of action that could advance the interests of the United States and advance the cause of freedom for the Cuban people.” But he said such diplomatic tools “should only be used after careful preparation and as part of a clear strategy.”

“I look forward to visit a Cuba in which all citizens enjoy the same rights and opportunities as other citizens in the hemisphere,” the president said.

The U.S. and Cuban governments, as well as the Cuban people regardless of where they live, should all agree on “the need to listen to the concerns of Cubans who live on the island” as part of moving the relationship forward. “This is why everything you are doing to project your voice is so important — not just for the advancement of the freedom of expression itself, but also for people outside of Cuba to gain a better understanding of the life, struggles, joys and dreams of Cubans on the island,” Obama told Sánchez.

Obama congratulated her for winning the Maria Moors Cabot Prize from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and said he was disappointed that Cuban authorities had denied her request to travel to New York to receive the award.

Generación Y, which gets approximately 1 million visits per month, regularly criticizes the Castro regime. Sanchez and fellow bloggers Orlando Luis Pardo and Claudia Cadelo were forcibly detained November 6 by plainclothes Cuban security personnel while on their way to a peaceful demonstration in Havana.

State Department spokesman Ian Kelly condemned the assault in a November 9 statement (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091110131013xjsnommis0.4712793.html>). He called on the Cuban government to “ensure the full respect of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens.”

The nongovernmental group Human Rights Watch also condemned the Castro government for “using brute force to try to silence Yoani Sánchez’s only weapon: her ideas.” José Miguel Vivanco, head of the organization’s Americas section, said, “This brazen attack makes clear that no one in Cuba who voices dissent is safe from violent reprisals.”

The full text of President Obama’s reply can be found at Yoani Sánchez’s blog, Generación Y (<http://www.desdecuba.com/generaciony/?p=1179>).

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)
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*WPD502 11/20/2009
Singh’s State Visit to Build on U.S.-India Relations
() (774)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The state visit of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is seen by the Obama administration as a new beginning for U.S.-India relations and a window to work on pressing issues, a senior U.S. diplomat says.

“This visit will be the first state visit of the administration and will highlight the strong and growing strategic partnership between the United States and India, and the friendship between the American and Indian people,” White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said in a recent prepared statement. “During the visit, the two leaders are expected to discuss a range of global, regional and bilateral issues of shared interest and common concern.”

The two leaders, who will meet at the White House November 24, will also likely review progress made in the strategic dialogue announced by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton during a visit to New Delhi in July, Gibbs said.

At a Washington Foreign Press Center briefing November 18 (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091119131909eaifas0.7983515.html>), Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake said the United States believes India has a role to

play as a strong U.S. ally and partner across a range of global challenges, from economic dislocation to energy security, climate change, the spread of deadly weapons and terrorism.

“Both countries feel that we have a significant opportunity now to take our strategic partnership to the next level,” Blake said. Singh and the Congress Party won recent national elections in May, which gave them a strong mandate to proceed with the prime minister’s agenda, he added.

Blake, who is assistant secretary for South and Central Asian affairs, said the U.S.-India relationship is based on five pillars beginning with strategic cooperation that includes arms sales, joint military exercises and joint military cooperation in combating maritime piracy off the coast of Somalia in the Gulf of Aden.

In March the Obama administration approved a \$2.1 billion sale of eight P-8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft to India — the largest U.S. arms transfer to India to date, according to news reports. In January 2008 the United States sold six C-130J Super Hercules military cargo planes to India valued at \$1 billion.

“There are significant new sales on the horizon, up to \$18 billion worth of contracts, for which American companies are competing,” Blake said. Part of that sale includes 126 multi-role fighter jets worth \$10.4 billion.

The second strategic area of cooperation between the United States and India is in counterterrorism. “Our cooperation has expanded considerably after the terrible attacks in Mumbai of last November [2008],” he said.

Another area of strategic cooperation is in nonproliferation of the world’s most deadly weapons. “There is now much greater cooperation as a result of the [2008] civil nuclear deal,” Blake said. “And increasingly now, we see India as a partner in global nonproliferation initiatives.”

The second pillar of the U.S.-India relationship is that of energy and climate change. With the Copenhagen international climate change conference now less than a month away, this has become a major focus of the president, Blake said. India currently emits about 4 percent of the world’s greenhouse gases, he said, making it the fifth largest global emitter. It is expected that as India’s industries expand, those emissions will rise by 50 percent over the next 20 years.

“It’s very important that India be part of this new agreement,” Blake said.

Blake said the United States remains committed to fully implementing the nuclear agreement signed last year. The U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement eases restrictions on U.S. nuclear exports to India and opens up a potential \$150 billion market in electricity generation. An important step to be taken by the Indian government and the parliament is to pass liability legislation, he said.

A third pillar is in economics, trade and agriculture, Blake said. Two-way trade with India was about \$5 billion in 1990, rose to \$14 billion in 2000 and reached nearly \$50 billion in 2008, according to U.S. trade statistics.

“We expect that growth to continue into the foreseeable future as India’s middle class continues to grow and as India’s economy continues to open up,” Blake said. “U.S. investment also has grown very quickly, and now totals about \$18 billion.”

Two other pillars of cooperation include education, and science and technology, Blake said. In July Clinton signed an agreement with Indian officials creating a \$30 million science and technology endowment to be used for joint research and development, innovation, and commercialization.

The Indian parliament is expected to open up the higher education sector in India to greater foreign investment, Blake said.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)
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*WPD503 11/20/2009

U.N. Condemns Human Rights Violations in Burma, North Korea
() (567)

By Margaret Besheer
VOA News

The U.N. General Assembly has expressed its grave concern about ongoing human rights violations in Burma and North Korea. In a vote the evening of November 19, the assembly adopted resolutions urging both states to end systematic and widespread abuses against their citizens.

The separate resolutions were adopted in the General Assembly committee responsible for social, humanitarian and cultural affairs — known as the Third Committee.

With 180 of the GA’s 192 members voting, the North Korea resolution was adopted with 97 countries in favor, 19 against and 65 abstentions.

Many of the abstentions and “no” votes were cast by member states that said they are opposed to resolutions that single out specific countries for censure. Others said they believe the right place for discussing human rights is in Geneva at the Human Rights Council.

But a Swedish diplomat, speaking on behalf of the European Union, which co-sponsored the resolution, said the measure is necessary because similar resolutions asking North Korea to end human rights abuses have gone unheeded for the last four years.

“We strongly urge the government to immediately put an end to the human rights violations in the country,” he said. “The General Assembly cannot ignore the suffering of the people of the DPRK. We must assume our responsibility and give voice to them. If we do not react, the political signal that we give would be that our concerns have decreased or that the situation has improved — which is not the case.”

The non-binding resolution expresses “very serious concern” at continuing reports of “systematic, widespread and grave violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights,” including torture, public executions, collective punishment, and the imposition of the death penalty for political and religious reasons.

North Korea’s deputy U.N. Ambassador Pak Tok Hun categorically rejected the resolution, saying it was a U.S. initiative intended to destroy North Korea.

“The draft resolution is nothing more than a document of political conspiracy of hostile forces, to put the veil of a unanimous message of the international community on the U.S.-led human rights campaign against the DPRK in a bid to deny and obliterate the state and social system of the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea,” said Pak Tok Hun.

He said that it would be “futile” to expect any outcome from the resolution, because North Korea would remain “invincible forever.”

The General Assembly committee also adopted a resolution on human rights abuses in Burma, which is also known as Myanmar. Of the 183 countries voting, 92 were in favor of the measure, 26 were against and 65 abstained.

Myanmar’s ambassador, Than Swe, said if western countries are truly concerned about human rights in his country or any other they should adopt a cooperative approach, instead of a resolution that he called “out of step with the times we live in.”

The resolution expresses the General Assembly’s “grave concern” over the recent trial, conviction and sentencing of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her return to house arrest. It calls for her immediate and unconditional release, as well as the release of the more than 2,000 political prisoners in Burma. It also urges the military regime to ensure the necessary steps toward free, fair, transparent and inclusive elections next year.

This report was provided by VOA News (<http://www.voanews.com/>).

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)
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*WPD504 11/20/2009

Former Coordinator for Iraq Participates in Live Chat November 23
(Ambassador David Satterfield to take your questions during one-hour event) (139)

Join the CO.NX community on Monday, November 23, when our guest will be Ambassador David M. Satterfield. Ambassador Satterfield previously served as the State Department's senior adviser and coordinator for Iraq. He will participate in a one-hour live discussion to answer your questions on Iraq and U.S. policies in the Middle East.

The event will be held at 9 a.m. EST (14:00 GMT). This is 1600 Cairo time and 1700 Baghdad.

There is no need to register for this event. Simply log in to <https://statedept.connectsolutions.com/conx> to post your questions and participate in the dialogue. You are free to post questions at any time before or during the event.

For a live countdown to the event please visit <http://tinyurl.com/yhwbydy>.

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*WPD505 11/20/2009

Education and International Scientific Collaboration in the U.S.
(November 24 webchat with Nobel Prize-winning Indian-American scientist) (192)

Venkatraman Ramakrishnan is the Indian-American co-winner of the 2009 Nobel Prize for Chemistry. On November 24, at 6:30 a.m. EST (11:30 GMT), he will discuss his experiences as a naturalized U.S. citizen, as a student in the United States, and as a world-renowned chemist.

Ramakrishnan was born in Tamil Nadu, India, and earned a degree in physics from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in Gujarat in 1971. He moved to the United States and earned his Ph.D. in physics from Ohio University. He is currently working as a senior scientist with the Medical Research Council Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge, England.

If you would like to participate in this webchat, please go to <https://statedept.connectsolutions.com/newdelhi/>. No registration is needed. Simply choose "Enter as a Guest," type in your preferred screen name, and join the discussion. We accept questions and comments in advance of, and at any time during, the program.

The transcript of this webchat will be available on America.gov's webchat page (<http://www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html>), where information about upcoming webchats is also available.

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*WPD506 11/20/2009

Transparency and the Public's Right to Information, Part 2

(December 2 webchat to follow up on Thomas Susman's November 17 chat) (356)

In response to participant feedback from our November 17 webchat, Thomas Susman, the director of the American Bar Association's Governmental Affairs Office, will again discuss transparency and the public's right to information, with an emphasis on how a legal right of access to government information helps enhance transparency and accountability in the United States.

This follow-up webchat will take place on December 2 at 8 a.m. EST (13:00 GMT).

Thomas Susman directs the office of the American Bar Association (ABA) that conducts the ABA's advocacy efforts before the U.S. Congress and other governmental entities on issues of importance to the legal profession. Before joining the ABA in May 2008, he was a partner in the Washington office of Ropes & Gray LLP for more than 25 years, where his work included counseling, litigation and lobbying on a wide range of regulatory, antitrust, lobbying, ethics and information law issues.

Susman is the co-editor of The Lobbying Manual (4th edition, 2009), published by the American Bar Association; has taught lobbying and the legislative process as an adjunct professor at the American University's Washington College of Law; and is chair of the Ethics Committee of the American League of Lobbyists. He has authored numerous articles on lobbying and is active in a variety of community and bar activities. Before joining Ropes & Gray, Susman was chief counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee, and before that he was in the Office of Legal Counsel at the U.S. Department of Justice. He is a graduate of Yale University and the University of Texas Law School, where he was editor-in-chief of the law review.

If you would like to participate in this webchat, please go to <https://statedept.connectsolutions.com/transparency>. No registration is needed.

Simply choose "Enter as a Guest," type in your preferred screen name, and join the discussion. We accept questions and comments in advance of, and at any time during, the program.

The transcript of this webchat will be available on America.gov's webchat page (<http://www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html>), where information about upcoming webchats is also available.

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*WPD507 11/20/2009

Transcript: Project Director Describes Mission of World Digital Library
(CO.NX webchat transcript, November 19) (2802)

Michelle Rago, the technical project director of the World Digital Library at the Library of Congress, answered questions in a November 19 CO.NX webchat about the World Digital Library and how interested institutions can get involved.

Following is the transcript:

(begin transcript)

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of International Information Programs
Webchat Transcript

CO.NX Chat: The World Digital Library

Guest: Michelle Rago
Date: November 19, 2009
Time: 11:00 a.m. EST (16:00 GMT)

CO.NX Moderator [Sarah]: Please join us on November 19 at 16:00 GMT to talk with Michelle Rago about the World Digital Library.

You may submit your questions at any time. Once submitted, they will appear in red on your screen.

You can read more about the World Digital Library project in this article:
<http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0905/wdl.html>.

And here is an article about the technological aspects of the WDL:
<http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0905/wdltech.html>.

CO.NX Moderator [Sarah]: Welcome to everyone just arriving! Our presenter, Michelle Rago, will be starting in about 20 minutes. Please continue to submit any questions you have.

Comment [Meena Reddy, Chennai, India 2]: Thank you Sarah. Looking forward to this webchat as I am also a librarian.

CO.NX Moderator [Sarah]: We are glad to have you!

Comment [boubekour]: hello

Comment [Aamir]: Hi

Comment [houria]: hi

CO.NX Moderator [Sarah]: Please feel free to introduce yourselves and tell us where you are from. I am in Washington, D.C.

Guest: Hello to everybody

Guest: Mariana Kiriakov - IRC Director, Moldova

Comment [tolo]: Hello everyone

Comment [Tsvetelina]: Hello, I am Tsvetelina Voycheva American corner at Public Library - Varna, Bulgaria

Comment [chakalov]: Hi everyone! My name is Andy and I'm from Sofia, Bulgaria :)

CO.NX Moderator [Sarah]: We are glad to have you, Andy!

Comment [Meena Reddy, Chennai, India 2]: Hello everyone who are on the Chat screen and all those who will be joining.

Comment [tolo]: welcome to you Michelle rago

Comment [monica]: hi sarah, thanks for having me. I'm from Peru. :)

Guest: Mariana Harjevschi, Moldova

CO.NX Moderator [Sarah]: Welcome, Mariana!

Comment [Delia Soto Caceda]: delia

CO.NX Moderator [Sarah]: Welcome!

Comment [Ruth Chirinos]: Hi Michelle, Sara thanks.

Comment [american corner bangalore, Manjula]: Hello, Madm, Manjula from American Corner Bangalore

Michelle Rago: Hello everyone. Thank you for being here. I am the technical project director of the World Digital Library. Thank you for all of the questions you have already sent. If any of these questions don't get answered or if you have other questions after this chat feel free to contact me at mrag@loc.gov (<mailto:mrag@loc.gov>).

Comment [Marcela – Lima]: Good morning

Comment [Meena Reddy, Chennai, India 2]: Hello Michelle, welcome aboard. As Sarah mentioned there are some good questions from us librarians from all over the world. And we are looking forward to your answers.

Question [Hemavathi B N]: What are objectives of the WDL?

Q: [american corner Bangalore Usha]: could you tell me the main objective of this WDL (world digital library)?

Q: [american corner bangalore, Manjula]: Please guide me more about world digital library.

Answer [Michelle Rago]: The objectives of the WDL are to promote international and intercultural understanding through access to primary sources that tell the stories and highlight the contributions of all countries and cultures. The project aims to increase the diversity of non-English, non-Western content on the Internet. We are also working to build digitization capacity in partner institutions that have not yet begun to digitize their cultural treasures.

Q: [Francisca]: How many libraries are participating in the World Digital Library?

A [Michelle Rago]: WDL partners currently include 55 institutions from 35 countries.

Q: [Tsvetelina]: Who and how select the documents and determine the criteria for digitalization?

A [Michelle Rago]: The WDL has a content selection working group that is made up of representatives from partner institutions. This group developed broad guidelines for selection. Partners decide what content they want to digitize and then contribute to the WDL. Many partners have lots of digitized content from which to choose. However, we do have a number of partners who have just started digitizing.

Q: [Meena Reddy, Chennai, India 2]: What are your future plans to enhance participation of more libraries?

A [Michelle Rago]: We welcome participation from any library or cultural institution that has treasures they want to make available to the world.

Q: [Meena Reddy, Chennai, India 2]: what issues do digital libraries face in metadata creation?

A [Michelle Rago]: This is one of the most important aspects of making the content accessible and integrating the content on one website. The WDL does require that each item be described consistently. We provide the WDL metadata requirements to partners and are building cataloging tools to make it easier to meet these requirements.

Q: [rukhsana]: is library providing online access to electronic DDC?

A [Michelle Rago]: The WDL uses the DDC for the "Browse by Topic" feature. We do not provide access to the entire DDC vocabulary though. This is OCLC's domain.

Q: [hadj moussa]: please are there books in arabic?

A [Michelle Rago]: The WDL site is available in seven languages -- Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian.

Content on the WDL is available in over 40 languages.

We don't translate the content within the actual primary sources. We translate the site navigation and the metadata used to describe each item.

Q: [Tsvetelina]: We are involved into the project for creating the European Digital Library, so could we be a partner in WDL?

A [Michelle Rago]: Absolutely! We have several partners who are also part of the EDL.

Q: [Guest]: How WDL deal with orphan works?

A [Michelle Rago]: Each partner is responsible for making sure they have the rights to make their content publicly available through the WDL site.

Q: [Meena Reddy, Chennai, India 2]: Would you say the digital libraries are designed to appeal young computer savvy users?

A: [Michelle Rago]: We have certainly put a lot of effort into the user experience for the site. We have done this to appeal to non-traditional digital library users.

The WDL site was developed by a team at the Library of Congress. The content was contributed by partners around the world. We wanted to make a site that would be visually interesting to explore.

Q: [Tsvetelina]: How could we apply for the participation?

A [Michelle Rago]: Anyone interested in joining the project can just contact me at mrag@loc.gov (<mailto:mrag@loc.gov>).

Q: [harouna ahmadou]: How can we learn the usage of this new innovation?

A [Michelle Rago]: Do you mean the usage statistics? If so, the response to the site has been great! On the very first day we received over 600,000 visitors from every country in the world. They visited over 7 million pages. We have continued to receive users from around the world. This is what we wanted to happen and why making the site available in 7 languages is so important. We want more users to be able to learn about these treasures in their native languages.

Q: [Meena Reddy, Chennai, India 2]: Thats great. So many visitors. But I am sure there many more who still have know about WDL.

A [Michelle Rago]: Yes. We do need to do more outreach. We are planning to launch a blog next year. We welcome any suggestions you have as to how we can improve in this area.

Q: [chakalov]: Do you intend one day to make this whole service non-free for the participant in the project?

A [Michelle Rago]: The site is free and will continue to be free.

Q: [Meena Reddy, Chennai, India 2]: Do you wait for an institution to get in touch with you or do you promote WDL. And what do you do to promote?

A [Michelle Rago]: We do promote the WDL through our partners. The site launch in April received a lot of coverage. Also, the Librarian of Congress and the previous Director General of UNESCO invited every national library and archive in the world to participate. We also attend major library conferences.

Q: [tolo]: I think too early for getting rid of the printed book: connecting in many parts of the world makes a barrier for participation in Digital library. How do you respond?

A [Michelle Rago]: We do not want to get rid of the printed book. We are really focused on historical, cultural treasures.

We do realize that Internet connectivity and access to computers are barriers to accessing this type of site and material.

Q: [Cairoirc]: Mervat sobehy. Cairo, Egypt. What is the criteria for digitalizing any book and are you planning to digitalize Arabic book as well?

A [Michelle Rago]: WDL partners decide which content they want to digitize. We have many Arabic manuscripts related to math and science on the site already. I am sure we will add more Arabic content in the future.

Q: [Cairoirc]: Do you think the digital library could replace our normal library?

A [Michelle Rago]: The goal of the WDL is not to replace your library. We are focused on rare, cultural treasures. The WDL is not an encyclopedia.

Q: [american corner bangalore, Manjula]: How can I use the digital library?

A [Michelle Rago]: The site is available at <http://www.wdl.org>. It is freely available. We have put a lot of effort into making sure the performance of the site is consistently fast around the world.

Q: [Jagath]: Wish to know when is it available online?

A [Michelle Rago]: The site is available now. It was launched in April of this year. We are adding more content regularly and are working to build the tools necessary to add more content more quickly.

Q: [Francisca]: Are you going to select works from any language, any culture, any country? I hope this library could help all the world, not only English speaking world

A [Michelle Rago]: We are. We welcome content that describes the history and culture of all countries in all languages.

Q: [Alfredo]: Here is an outreach idea. You could have alerts of RSS feed so that users can know when new material is available in the WDL, specifying the origin of the material. With that, we (for example, the IRC at the US Embassy in Peru) can inform our audience about the new uploads from Peru or Latin America.

A [Michelle Rago]: Great idea! We have one RSS feed now, but we haven't publicized it much. It is available from the WDL home page if your browser is set up to recognize that. We do plan to add more in the future. Your specific idea is a good one.

Q: [Guest]: Is WDL cooperating with Google (e.g. to avoid duplications)?

A [Michelle Rago]: Google contributed start-up funding for the WDL project. We are not working with them on exchanging content though.

Q: [Alfredo]: Hi from Peru. What is the WDL doing or planning to do to build the digitization capacity of partner institutions?

A [Michelle Rago]: We raise money to assist partner institutions in getting the equipment and training they need to set up their own digitization center.

Q: [Meena Reddy, Chennai, India 2]: Suggestion to promote WDL. In spite of email, there is nothing better than a WDL representative visiting various countries and meeting people in organized programs Nothing better than a in person touch. I am sure this will reach out better to institutions in the country.

A [Michelle Rago]: I agree! We need to do this in your part of the world.

Q: [chakalov]: Do you intend to expand the project further with other digitalized materials such as audio and video?

A [Michelle Rago]: We do have a few audio and video items on the site. As I said earlier this is just the beginning for the content. We are now focusing on how we can add more content more quickly. We will definitely add to the existing audio and video selections.

Q: [Ruth Chirinos]: Is there some standards?

A [Michelle Rago]: We do have standards for digitization quality and for metadata. One of the most important metadata requirements is that each item has a description. This description lets users know what the item is and why it's important.

This kind of information is what users want, but we rarely provide it because it is expensive and time-consuming. We think it is worth it though and it is what this content deserves.

CO.NX Moderator [Sarah]: Thank you all for your great questions! Don't forget to check out our Facebook page (<http://co-nx.state.gov>) to comment on this webchat and find out about upcoming chats.

Q: [chakalov]: Does Dublin Core XML format meets your metadata requirements?

A [Michelle Rago]: Most likely. We can map MARC, Dublin Core, and MODS to the WDL requirements.

Our requirements are related more to the content rather than the format. It's more important for us to have certain fields completed (e.g., Place, Topic) so that the item can be integrated into the WDL site.

CO.NX Moderator [Sarah]: Read more about the World Digital Library project in this article: <http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0905/wdl.html>. Read more about the technological aspects of the WDL here: <http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0905/wdltech.html>.

Q: [harouna ahmadou]: Hi! I am Harouna Ahmadou from American Corner Garoua in the North region Cameroon. I would like to know how our libraries can benefit of the WDL.

A [Michelle Rago]: We would welcome partners from Cameroon who could contribute content about Cameroon's history and culture.

Q: [Cairoirc]: What are the types of books will be available on the digital library

A [Michelle Rago]: We are focused on historical cultural treasures. Most of the books available are rare. We also have manuscripts, photographs, maps, journals, sound recordings, and video.

Q: [harouna ahmadou]: Can a library be computerized without an Internet connection?

A [Michelle Rago]: Libraries can digitize their content with or without an Internet connection.

Q: [Cairoirc - Sahe saad Egypt]: Do you have to take permission from the publisher when you add any book to your digital library?

A [Michelle Rago]: Each partner is responsible for making sure they have the rights to contribute their content to the WDL. We make all of the content publicly and freely available on the site. We provide access to complete items (for example, entire books).

Q: [Hemavathi B N]: is other libraries are also take part in this?

A [Michelle Rago]: We currently have 55 partners in 35 countries. We are getting more every week!

Q: [Iizia]: How does wdl promote international and intercultural understanding?

A [Michelle Rago]: We believe this can happen by providing access to these resources in multiple languages and by encouraging users around the world to learn more about their own and other cultures.

Q: [Jagath]: Does any Sri Lankan library has sent their collection/s to this?

A [Michelle Rago]: We don't currently have any partners in Sri Lanka, but we would be very happy to welcome them!

Q: [Meena Reddy, Chennai, India 2]: Michelle, let us know when you will be visiting India.

A [Michelle Rago]: Will do!

Q: [Francisca]: What are your plans to disseminate digital works in developing countries?

A [Michelle Rago]: The site is publicly available. We plan to work on mobile applications next year. Is this what you mean or are you talking about other methods of dissemination? Please send any suggestions.

Q: [chakalov]: I find enormous effort to map all kinds of metadata that the participants are using around the globe.

A [Michelle Rago]: It is an effort, but we are improving our mapping specifications and cataloging application to ease this burden. We believe that good, consistent metadata is the only way to make a well-integrated site. If you don't have the consistent metadata then all you can do is search the content. We wanted to produce a more functional and interesting site than that.

I hope we can experiment with wiki-type contributions as well to allow users to help in this area. Of course we would always have a professional level of review to follow.

CO.NX Moderator [Sarah]: Thank you all for coming today! Our time is coming to end.

Comment [Michelle Rago]: Thank you all very much for being here. Please feel free to contact me with follow-up.

Comment [Marcela – Lima]: thank you Michelle, Thank you Sarah/CO.NX

Comment [Meena Reddy, Chennai, India 2]: Thank You Michelle for your answers and Sarah for coordinating. All the best to both of you.

Comment [Ruth Chirinos]: Thanks Michelle, and congratulations it's a great work.

Comment [Meena Reddy, Chennai, India 2]: I will be promoting the text of this chat to some of my librarian friends. FYI

CO.NX Moderator [Sarah]: The webchat is now closed. We wish to thank Michelle Rago for joining us today. A transcript of today's webchat will be posted to <http://co-nx.state.gov> and to <http://www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html> within three business days. Speakers are chosen for their expertise and may not reflect the views of the U.S. Department of State.

(end transcript)

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*WPD508 11/20/2009

Transcript: State Department Daily Press Briefing

(Deputy spokesman Robert Wood briefs the press November 20) (5473)

(begin transcript)

U.S. Department of State
Daily Press Briefing Index
Friday, November 20, 2009
1:10 p.m. EST

Briefer: Robert Wood, Deputy Spokesman

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2009
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

1:10 p.m. EST

MR. WOOD: Good afternoon, and happy Friday to all. Lach, it's good to see you.

QUESTION: Yeah, good to see you at the podium.

MR. WOOD: Oh, well, I don't know about that. I've got a couple of items I want to start off with and then I'll take your questions. The first is to give you an update on the P-5+1 meeting that took place in Brussels this morning. The ministers of the United Kingdom, China, France, Germany, Russia, the U.S., and the EU high representative met, as I think many of you know, in New York on September 23. They agreed that, quote, "The meeting on October 1 will provide an opportunity to seek a comprehensive, long-term, and appropriate solution to the Iranian nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiation. We expect a serious response from Iran and we'll decide, in the context of our dual-track approach as a result of the meeting, on our next steps," unquote.

Today, the political directors of these countries met in Brussels to take stock of developments since the October 1 meeting in Geneva. We are disappointed by the lack of follow-up to the three understandings reached in Geneva at the Geneva meeting between High Representative Solana and Dr. Jalili. Although the IAEA has visited the Qom's enrichment facility, we noted the IAEA director general's assessment that Iran should have declared to the agency the construction of this facility much earlier and has, therefore, not complied with its safeguard obligations. In addition, the construction of a new enrichment facility is in defiance of several UN

Security Council resolutions. The IAEA board will have to address this issue next week.

Iran has not engaged in an intensified dialogue and, in particular, has refused to have a new meeting before the end of October to discuss nuclear issues. Iran has not responded positively to the IAEA proposed agreement for the provision of nuclear fuel for its Tehran research reactor.

We urge Iran to reconsider the opportunity offered by this agreement, to meet the humanitarian needs of its people, and to engage seriously with us in a dialogue and negotiations. This remains our consistent objective. We have agreed that a new meeting will take place shortly in order to complete our assessment of the situation and to decide about next steps in the context of our dual-track approach.

Last item – bear with me a bit. This has to do with a vote that was taken earlier today with regard to Iran’s human rights violations. This was in the UN.

The United States welcomes the resolution passed today by the United Nations calling upon the Government of Iran to respect its human rights obligations fully. In addition, to longstanding concerns about the human rights situation in Iran, the resolution expresses deep concern about the brutal response of Iranian authorities to peaceful demonstrations in the wake of the June 12 election. It calls on the Government of Iran to abolish torture and arbitrary imprisonment, as well as any executions, including stoning, carried out without due process of law. The resolution also calls on Iran to cooperate fully with and admit entry to the UN Special Rapporteur on torture or other cruel, inhumane – excuse me – inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance.

We’ll issue the full statement after the briefing. I just want to point out this is the largest vote margin on such a resolution on Iran in the UN ever. Over 60 percent of those members voted in support.

And with that, I will take – happily take your questions.

QUESTION: Robert, on the P-5+1 statement. It said that they took stock of recent events and that the next meeting would be about next steps. Was there no discussion of the way ahead at this meeting today?

MR. WOOD: Well, I think at this meeting today what the political directors wanted to do was to take a look at Iran’s responses, or lack thereof, to a number of calls by the international community. And I think what was certainly agreed on was that we needed to have a follow-up meeting and to talk about next steps – all part of the dual-track approach that, as you know, we have taken from the beginning. So this

next meeting that will take place, will obviously take a closer look at what measures we may need to take with regard to Iran.

But again, we continue to call on Iran to accept this proposal with regard to the Tehran research reactor. We think it's a good one. We think it's a great way for Iran to show, if indeed its intentions are peaceful, that they want to cooperate with the international community with regard to its nuclear program. So we'll just have to see.

But no, the date – there's been no date scheduled for the next meeting. But --

QUESTION: And the fact that you would wait to another meeting to discuss next steps would indicate you still think that the Iranians may change their mind and --

MR. WOOD: Well, we're certainly hopeful that they will change their mind. We think – as I said, this is something that the Iranians agreed to in principle. If you remember back at the Geneva meeting, they agreed in principle to this proposal that was brought about under the auspices of the IAEA. And since then, Iran has had a difficult time saying yes to this proposal. So we're hopeful that Iran will, but should it not, we will obviously take a look at the pressure side of our dual-track approach.

Let me go to Jill --

QUESTION: Robert, I just wanted to clarify then --

MR. WOOD: Yeah.

QUESTION: So on the two issues, you've got visiting Qom and you said they should have disclosed earlier.

MR. WOOD: That's right.

QUESTION: And so the problem here is their decision not to ship out that nuclear fuel. Is that correct?

MR. WOOD: The problem here is that Iran has not responded positively to the proposal. I don't want to get into the details of the proposal. I think most of you know what was included in the proposal. And what we're saying to Iran is that it needs to take this offer. It committed to doing so – taking up the proposal – and we think it's a great confidence-building measure for the international community. I don't know why Iran hasn't been able to say yes, up until now. It could have to do with internal political – the internal political situation of Iran, but it's really hard to say. But we think this is a real good way forward, and Iran needs to take it up.

QUESTION: But it sounds like this is a very serious moment then, because you were saying one more meeting, that's it.

MR. WOOD: No, I didn't say that at all. I didn't mean to say that that was it. I said at the next meeting we would take a look at – based on Iran's response, up until that – at that time, or lack thereof, and take a look and see what new measures we may have to take. But I'm not saying that the next meeting is it – that's it and then we start moving to the pressure track.

QUESTION: Then why stretch it out? I mean, isn't it quite clear that they're not going to do this?

MR. WOOD: Look, we are – we have said from the beginning, we're willing to go the extra mile with regard to diplomacy. The President and the Secretary have been very clear about that. Iran has had plenty of time to consider this proposal. We still hope that they will reconsider and give the IAEA Director General a yes. But that's up to Iran. But again, as I said earlier, Jill, we've – our approach has been one of two tracks. And at the next meeting we will take a look again at where things are, and then discuss the way forward.

QUESTION: Will the next meeting be weeks or months?

MR. WOOD: I don't know yet. I don't suspect it'll be months, but I don't know at this point.

QUESTION: And will it be at the political directors level or –

MR. WOOD: Don't know. At this point, I would assume it would be, but that – there could be a decision taken later that it would be at another level. But at this point, I would assume it's political directors.

QUESTION: On the second track, which presumably might involve sanctions, is there confidence now that the P-5+1 are agreed that that is one route that we might have to take that sanctions should be discussed as a potential next step?

MR. WOOD: Well, the issue of sanctions has been discussed before. This is certainly not new. We've said that we want to leave a – there's a window of opportunity for Iran. That window is not going to be open forever. And if it doesn't respond to the calls of the international community for it to live up to its international obligations, then we will have to look at the pressure track. But I don't want to get a head of where we might go on that. But it's very clear, the international community has said to Iran that if you're willing to take important confidence-building measures, such as the Tehran research reactor proposal, that it is possible that we can move toward a better relationship, but Iran has yet to make that decision.

Yes, Lach.

QUESTION: Can you conclude that the Iranians are stringing you along and just buying time in this?

MR. WOOD: I can't tell you what they are trying to do. But as I said, I think the international community's patience is limited. And we're saying to Iran, we're reaching out our hand, we want to work with you on addressing the concerns that the international community has about your nuclear activities. We – again, this Tehran research reactor proposal is a good one. It can go a long way in addressing a number of the concerns that the international community has – not all of them – but it certainly would be an important confidence-building measure. So it's really going to be up to Tehran.

QUESTION: Robert, just another clarification. Legally, officially, has Iran actually said we are not going to do this? There's been so much back and forth – maybe we will, maybe we won't – I don't – what is the official version from the government, if there is one?

MR. WOOD: Well, as far as I know, Iran hasn't responded formally to this proposal, but we've heard a lot of soundings from Iran. Ian addressed those yesterday. And we just hope that Iran will give a yes – a positive answer to this proposal. But that's the best I can help you on that.

QUESTION: Is China and Russia on the same page? And are they ready to discuss measures, new measures against Iran or new sanctions?

MR. WOOD: Well, I certainly don't want to speak for either government, but I can tell you that the P-5+1 has been of one mind on the need to approach Iran's nuclear program through a two-track approach. And both countries, like the other members of the P-5+1, agree that we have concerns about Iran's nuclear activities. Iran needs to address them. We all believe that Iran having a nuclear weapons capability is not a good thing. And so, in that particular – in that way, yes, the EU-5 – excuse me – the P-5+1 is in agreement that Iran needs to live up to its obligations.

QUESTION: But (inaudible) China or France or Russia? Even they have their economic and their political issues or their concern or they are with Iran on those issues?

MR. WOOD: I'm sorry, Goyal.

QUESTION: As far as economic and political concerns are there between those countries, especially economic, Russia, China and France.

MR. WOOD: Well, I can't speak for what their concerns are, except to say that they have been – they've made it very clear that Iran's nuclear program is of concern, and that Iran needs to address those concerns, and that having a – Iran having a nuclear weapon is just not in the best interest of the international community.

QUESTION: Another clarification.

MR. WOOD: Okay.

QUESTION: How far along are you – is the United States with its allies in determining specifically what kind of sanctions you would use if this comes to what it looks like it's moving toward?

MR. WOOD: Well, Jill, as you can imagine, I'm not going to get into details of what types of measures we might take with regard to the pressure track. Again, what I would say from here is that Iran needs to take up this offer; that the IAEA and the United States, Russia, France worked on. Iran needs to take it up. It's a good deal for Iran's people. It's a good deal for addressing confidence of the international community. And I don't know what more to say about it, except that Iran needs to respond.

QUESTION: Well, then can you at least tell us do you have a packet of sanctions ready to go and defined at this stage? Or is it that the United States has a packet ready to go and must sell it to its allies?

MR. WOOD: Well, Jill, I don't – as I said, I don't want to get into a discussion of what measures we may or may not be thinking about. I think, as I said at the beginning, we have been committed to this dual-track approach. We call on Iran to address the issues that are outstanding. Should Iran not do that, then we will have to look at other measures, but I really don't want to get into what those measures may or may not be.

QUESTION: Does there ever come a point when it becomes too late for Iran to respond? What – I mean, I realize that you don't want to sort of draw down an official deadline, but there must be some stage of this process where an Iranian response, yes or no, is going to be too late; you're already going to be on – entrained for doing something else.

MR. WOOD: Well, as I said earlier, this window is not going to be open forever. We're not at that point yet, but we will certainly let you know when – if and when we reach that point.

QUESTION: But Robert, as far as sanctions are concerned, go back anywhere, really even 10 year, 15, 20 years – has they worked – any one country – any country around the globe, including Burma – any country you take actions – sanctions now? I have not seen actually, but we keep talking about sanctions – new sanctions, more sanctions?

MR. WOOD: Well, as I've said many times from here and others have as well, you cannot really compare the two situations anywhere. Sanctions have been used in

the past as a tool to try to influence a country's behavior, but I just don't think it's a good idea to compare them. And again, Iran knows what it needs to do and we continue – we and others continue to call on Iran to accept this proposal that they agreed to in principle.

Charlie.

QUESTION: Since we've settled that, can we move on to Honduras?

QUESTION: One question more about Iran. Do you --

QUESTION: Well, we had settled – sorry.

QUESTION: Do you expect that this is going to generate more tensions in the Middle East? How the U.S. is going to address the new tensions that this kind of statement is coming to the Middle East, especially for Israel or other countries are also --

MR. WOOD: Well --

QUESTION: -- very worried about this.

MR. WOOD: Well, I think Iran's noncompliance has raised tensions in the region. There's no question about it. There are lots of concerns not only in the neighborhood, but throughout the international community about Iran's activities. Iran needs to comply with its obligations, and that – once Iran does that, if and when Iran does that, it will help reduce tensions. But to date, Iran hasn't decided to do that.

Charlie, you wanted to go to something else – on this, Dave?

QUESTION: Yeah, just an ancillary question --

MR. WOOD: Sure.

QUESTION: Ahmadinejad is going to be visiting Brazil in a couple of days. Is the fact that a friendly government like that welcoming Ahmadinejad – does that tend to dilute international solidarity on the nuclear issue?

MR. WOOD: Well, President Ahmadinejad going to Brazil, that's an issue between the Government of Brazil and the Government of Iran. What we would hope is that the Government of Brazil would raise some of these concerns that we have, many of which I've just laid out here, about Iran in those meetings. But beyond that, I don't have anything to add to that.

Charlie.

QUESTION: Yes, on Honduras, you want to bring us up to date on the latest developments and whether or not you think Mr. Zelaya might return to the – any kind of power before the election?

MR. WOOD: Well, as I think many of you are aware, there was a statement made last night by Mr. Micheletti about taking a leave of absence. And we welcome that he is going to take a leave of absence and expect its prompt implementation. This will allow some breathing space for the process in Honduras to go forward. And so the announcement will also allow for the people of Honduras to focus on the elections. And so that's really where we are.

QUESTION: When you say you welcome, what do you mean by you welcome? Means that you are happy or – that he's taking a leave of absence?

MR. WOOD: I mean we welcome.

Yes.

QUESTION: (Inaudible), right?

MR. WOOD: Anything else on Honduras?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MR. WOOD: Dave --

QUESTION: I mean, as far as you're concerned, this is – is this a good solution now? I mean, no longer does the United States expect Zelaya to come back or --

MR. WOOD: Well, I think what would be a good solution for the situation, the crisis in Honduras, is for the implementation of the Tegucigalpa-San Jose Accords. That, I think, is what needs to happen now. And the sooner that we can get that implementation, the sooner we will get to what we hope will be a resolution to this crisis.

Jill, you had --

QUESTION: And who runs the country while Mr. Micheletti is on vacation?

MR. WOOD: That's a good question. I don't really know the answer to that. I'm sure there is one and I'll try and get one.

QUESTION: Zelaya said that he wants to delay the elections. He says that in this situation, the elections cannot be take – cannot be done.

MR. WOOD: Well, there is an accord that President Zelaya and his team and Mr. Micheletti and his team agreed to. And we think if we are going to address the issues of restoring democracy, if we're going to deal with the the question of reconciliation, that the best way to do this is to move forward with the implementation of the accord. It's in the best interests of the Honduran people. The Honduran people want to end this crisis. And as we've said, one of the most important things that needs to happen first is the formation of this national unity government. And we want to see that happen as soon as possible.

On Honduras?

QUESTION: No.

MR. WOOD: Okay.

QUESTION: A different issue.

MR. WOOD: Okay.

QUESTION: Two quick questions on India into one, actually. As far as the joint statement was concerned in China, between U.S. and China, and there is still theories going on around India because of what the joint statement was saying, that China should play a major role in South Asia. What they are saying is that China has no rule of law, no human rights, no democracy, and India is world's largest democracy, two major powers in the region are rising. And how can China play such a role with millions of people are under communist rule and they have no respect for any human being over there or supporting even around the globe, many terrorist activities?

Now, second, this is now on the eve of prime minister of India's visit to Washington on Tuesday – and second, Carnegie International is calling on the United States that China has called for the U.S. to support a major, I mean, permanent UN Security Council seat for India.

MR. WOOD: Well, to go to the first part of your question, I mean, India and China are two rising powers, very important players on the global scene. And China – as we have said, there are issues of concern that we have with the Chinese. We've raised them when appropriate, and at all levels of our interaction. Hopefully, China will move in the direction that we'd like to see it go. It's an important nation, and India and China are – they're going to be countries that we deal very closely with in the coming years. And I don't know what more to say about it. I mean, they're key, and our relationships with both are growing.

Do we have concerns with both? Of course. I'm sure – and both have concerns with us, and that's why we need to work closely. We have intensive dialogues with both countries. And I think both countries also realize the importance of the Indo-Sino

relationship, and to work toward improving that not only for regional stability, but for global stability as well.

And the second part of your question with regard to – please refresh my memory, because I wasn't --

QUESTION: Carnegie International is calling the U.S. for permanent UN Security seat for India.

MR. WOOD: Yeah. I mean, that's something that – the whole question of Security Council expansion is one that the UN's been dealing with for quite some time, and we'll just have to see how that goes.

QUESTION: You think there will be an announcement during prime minister of India's visit in the White House about this?

MR. WOOD: Well, I don't know about any announcement about that, but I certainly – if I had an announcement before the visit, I wouldn't want to make it here.

QUESTION: How about a specific bilateral issue with India? The civil-nuclear cooperation deal was hailed as the big, great triumph of U.S.-Indian relations last year, but it still remains unimplemented, and one reason for that is the lack of a reprocessing agreement between the United States and India. I understand there have been talks about that. Is there any – where do we stand with the reprocessing agreement? Who is it who would make that decision ultimately? And is that something that we might expect during the prime minister's visit?

MR. WOOD: Well, there are a number of players involved in dealing with that question that you just raised. And we've said from the beginning that agreement is a good agreement and brings India into the nonproliferation mainstream. There are folks working on it. I'll see if we have anything that we can --

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. WOOD: -- give you an update on.

QUESTION: Great, thanks.

MR. WOOD: Yes.

QUESTION: A different topic – on Afghanistan?

MR. WOOD: Sure.

QUESTION: Yeah, I wanted to ask about the raid today on the village of Hyderabad by Afghan and NATO forces. There were lots of angry villagers out all over TV

screens screaming that the ISAF forces were killing innocent people. And I just wondered, as the Administration's policy formulates, what is going to be done to placate those villagers and make them realize that these raids are important? Or are they important?

MR. WOOD: Well, let me just say as a general principle one of our concerns – and I think General McChrystal has made this very clear – is that we want to focus more on protecting civilian populations. That's critical. Winning over the populous in Afghanistan is something – it's a must. There is – it's a very dangerous security environment. There's no question about it. I mean, you've heard many people speaking from here, you've heard the Secretary, you've heard the President speaking about what our objectives are in Afghanistan. And we think it's important that the Taliban and al-Qaida be defeated. Those two groups, networks, are a major threat to the security, safety, and well-being of the Afghan people.

What we're – we realize that it's going to be a difficult challenge for the Afghan Government to deal with the security issues, and we're going to – we're a partner, we're going to work closely with them to try to do that. But we certainly recognize that it's important to make sure that the civilian population is protected, but at the same time, we've got to make sure – and President Karzai has spoken to this very clearly – that we counter this violent extremism as best we can, because that's a major cancer in Afghan society. And so we will be continuing to pursue our efforts along with our partners in ISAF and with our Afghan partner, but also at the same time, do our best to try to bring some stability and peace to Afghanistan, which it so desperately needs.

QUESTION: These villagers would clearly disagree with that. They would say that there was a raid, nobody told us what was going on --

MR. WOOD: Well --

QUESTION: -- and these were our friends.

MR. WOOD: I'd have to refer you to ISAF for that because I'm not aware of that specific incident. But I was just trying to give you a general statement of policy.

QUESTION: Robert?

MR. WOOD: Yes.

QUESTION: There is an internal crisis in this moment in Spain based on a situation that we don't address much here – is the piracy in Somalia, and the Spanish Government was involved with some of their forces and they – finally, this boat paid \$4 million to be rescued to the piracies – to the pirates in Somalia. I want to know if there are specific actions with the U.S., the State Department and other countries to try to improve the situation there in Somalia?

MR. WOOD: Well, I think you know very well we've been working in the UN to try to come up with an appropriate framework for dealing with acts of piracy. With regard to the Spanish Government's policies, I have to refer you to them, but --

QUESTION: No, there's an internal crisis between their position and the government because of what happened there.

MR. WOOD: Well, again, I don't want to get involved in internal Spanish politics. I can just tell you that Spain is an important partner, as well as a number of other countries, in terms of trying to fight piracy off the coast of Somalia. It's -- this is kind of a new issue that we've been dealing with intensively of late, but there's a lot -- there's good cooperation in the international community in trying to counter piracy. And we'll continue to work on this issue because it -- piracy has to be stamped out.

Somalia, as you know, has been without -- the transitional government there has had some real difficulties. And the instability in Somalia, I think, is breeding a lot of the acts of piracy. And so we're going to redouble our efforts in the international community to try to --

QUESTION: Do you expect there's going to be a meeting or an encounter in Africa to review this situation?

MR. WOOD: Oh, the --

QUESTION: It's not going to help maybe these communities or something because they are attacking all these ships in that region.

MR. WOOD: Well, I don't know if there is a plan for an upcoming meeting or anything like that. There could very well be at some point. But there are a lot of consultations and meetings going on to deal with the whole piracy question. So the international community is focused on this right now; we're just trying to come up with a framework, good measures to take in order to try to eliminate it. But this goes all the way back to the days of Thomas Jefferson and the issue of piracy, so --

QUESTION: One of -- the money was used, and one -- some part of the money was divided in some groups, and one couple married using this money. That's what the news are saying. (Laughter.)

MR. WOOD: I don't know anything about that.

QUESTION: Are you working at the United Nations level?

MR. WOOD: On the issue of piracy?

QUESTION: On this, yeah, yes.

MR. WOOD: Yeah, absolutely.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. WOOD: Yes, Jill.

QUESTION: Robert, just on – one thing Andy was mentioning about this civil-nuclear cooperation deal, if I understood you correctly right at the end, you said it brought – it brings them into the nonproliferation mainstream; is that what you said?

MR. WOOD: Yes.

QUESTION: I mean, there are many people who would argue completely from the opposite viewpoint, that it gives them a free pass.

MR. WOOD: Oh, I know. There are a number of –

QUESTION: So I know we'll get into this next week because he will be here on Tuesday. But just as a general statement in principle, how do you make that argument? I mean, why – what do you say to the people who say that they did get a free pass, that they're very much not part of the mainstream?

MR. WOOD: Well, for one, India is a responsible player on the global scene, and that's something that one cannot deny. India feels very strongly about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It's cooperative with us in a number of fora. I think if you go back and you look at what we said at the time that the agreement was finally signed, that this was a good thing. And it will help us in our efforts to try to stem the scourge of nonproliferation and --

Yeah, go ahead.

QUESTION: Why are they an exception to everybody else?

MR. WOOD: Well, it's – look, I don't know who everybody else is we're talking about. I can just –

QUESTION: Any other country that has any nuclear material.

MR. WOOD: Well, I can just – again, Jill, reiterate that we think that this agreement is a good one. We think it will contribute to our nonproliferation efforts around the world. And that's the best I can do for you at this point.

Yes, sir.

QUESTION: A Japanese engineer has been abducted in Yemen by an armed group which has demanded the release of jailed family member who may be part of al-Qaida. I have two questions. Has State Department consulted with the Yemeni Government regarding this issue? And how do you see the risks of releasing this prisoner?

MR. WOOD: Well, I'm not familiar with this case. We obviously would condemn anyone who has been taken hostage. But I'd just have to refer you to the Japanese and Yemeni Governments on this. I just haven't heard about this case.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. WOOD: Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:40 p.m.)

(end transcript)

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*WPD509 11/20/2009

Transcript: State Department Daily Press Briefing
(Spokesman Ian Kelly briefs reporters November 19) (6153)

(begin transcript)

U.S. Department of State
Daily Press Briefing Index
Thursday, November 19, 2009
1:36 p.m. EST

Briefer: Ian Kelly, Spokesman

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2009

(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

1:36 p.m. EST

MR. KELLY: Okay. Good afternoon. The Secretary had a full day in Kabul today. She met with, of course, the Afghan leadership, with international partners and allies. She had breakfast with foreign ministers, met with U.S. and international troops and staff from Provincial Reconstruction Teams, and also, of course, with Embassy staff.

She noted in her public comments that she was encouraged by President Karzai's pledge in his inaugural speech to battle corruption and get his security forces sufficiently trained to take the lead in the country within five years. She also noted that President Karzai's speech set forth an agenda for change and reform and that he outlined steps for tackling corruption.

She added that the U.S. is under no illusions about the difficulty of its mission in Afghanistan, that the road ahead is fraught with challenges and imperfect choices, and said that setbacks are inevitable and that, of course, we must remain realistic about what can be accomplished.

QUESTION: That's real optimism.

MR. KELLY: She also said we're starting to see results in areas like alternatives to poppy cultivation, opening of girls' schools, opening of clinics, and better roads, and said that the international community can do better, and vowed more transparency in our aid. And she stressed that, while there are -- there will be setbacks, she believes we can make progress.

So with that, I will take your questions. Mr. Lee gets the first question.

QUESTION: Are you going to announce Bosworth's travel, since it seems to be --

MR. KELLY: I think it's been announced.

QUESTION: Yeah, it has.

MR. KELLY: Yeah.

QUESTION: One wonders why it wasn't announced yesterday from here.

MR. KELLY: One wonders. Well, I think it may have something to do with the fact that the President announced it a few hours after that.

QUESTION: Yes, his big news sending the envoy to North Korea. What are the details of this?

MR. KELLY: He is – he's going on December – he will be there on December 8th with a small interagency delegation to engage in direct talks with North Korean officials. And our goal here is, of course, the resumption of the Six-Party Talks and to secure North Korea's reaffirmation of the September 2005 joint agreement.

And as you know, we made this decision after consulting with our partners in South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia. And Ambassador Bosworth plans to continue on after Pyongyang to the capitals of our partners in these Six-Party Talks to give them a readout of his talks with North Korean officials.

QUESTION: Including Moscow?

MR. KELLY: Including Moscow.

QUESTION: Do you have dates for those?

MR. KELLY: I don't have an exact schedule for you beyond the fact that he's going to be in Pyongyang on December 8th.

QUESTION: Are you under any illusions that the North Koreans will come back willingly?

MR. KELLY: Well, it's pretty fair to say that we – we're going to go into this with our eyes wide open. We are not interested in being distracted by issues beyond the issues – the most important issues facing the region in terms of security, and that's the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. So that will be the focus of our – of Ambassador Bosworth's trip to Pyongyang.

Within the context of the Six-Party Talks, there's – there is an opportunity to have working groups around the Six-Party Talks about bilateral issues. We're not interested in those kinds of issues in this – in these direct talks that we're going to have in Pyongyang.

Yes.

QUESTION: Whom is he going to meet in Pyongyang? Is it Kang Suk-ju, or do you know?

MR. KELLY: Yeah. I don't – I'm not prepared to announce exactly who it's going to be. But I understand it's going to be an appropriate, really senior level for Ambassador Bosworth to have these discussions that I just described.

Yes.

QUESTION: Nazira Karimi for Ariana Television. As you mentioned, President Karzai at his inauguration today, he has pledged too many things, and he mentioned about fighting against corruption. Do you think that he going to be able to deliver it? And also, of course, he has an expectation from the U.S. authority and also international community.

MR. KELLY: Yeah.

QUESTION: What do you think about U.S. position or role about this?

MR. KELLY: Well, I think the important thing is – is that he made a real commitment in the speech to tackle these issues. And they've already taken some steps to try and institutionalize the fight against corruption. And so we see it – we saw that speech as something hopeful in terms of setting out a new way forward for the new government. But as they do go forward, we'll be looking to see the government actually implement and follow through on some of these steps that he outlined.

I think that for our part, we also see this as a new opportunity for our partnership with Afghanistan. And on our side, we also want to ensure that there is transparency and accountability for the assistance that we're providing. And we have – we've set up some, on our own end, some of our own monitoring and verification mechanisms to ensure that our aid is meeting – is going to the right people, is meeting our goals for Afghanistan. And so we have a very robust monitoring procedure in place. We're conducting a review of all the recipients on the side of the Afghan Government for our aid to ensure that they're using the aid in the proper way. And if these agencies and ministries don't – if we're not able to certify them as having open and accountable procedures, they simply won't receive the direct aid.

So this really is kind of a new chapter in our relationship and a renewed partnership. But it's a partnership with mutual responsibilities. President Karzai recognized that they have their own responsibilities to be open and transparent, and we recognize that we have our own responsibilities to our own taxpayers, to our own people, but also to U.S. national interests to ensure that this is – that our aid program meets our goals.

QUESTION: How about the new cabinet? U.S. will have a special opinion – they don't want to interfere about the people who will be in the future government of President Karzai?

MR. KELLY: Well, I think that the next step here is for the president to present his slate of ministers to the lower house. So there is a mechanism in place in Kabul for a kind of – I guess we'd call it a confirmation process. It's not really a confirmation process, but they need – the slate of ministers needs to be approved. And I expect that will happen over the next few weeks. But I think the key here is that our assistance really is performance-based. And that's not just us. That's also – that's a pledge that President Karzai made as well, and it's a pledge that we make to our taxpayers too, that our aid has to be delivered in an open and transparent and accountable fashion.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Even after Karzai made these promises today, and we're on the verge of making decisions on whether or not we're going to be sending or how many troops we'll be sending, the Germans came out today – the German defense minister came out today and said that they did not want to send more troops. They're our third-largest partner in Afghanistan. What's your reaction to that?

MR. KELLY: Well, I mean, Germany is an important partner, and they have a very comprehensive approach to assisting in Afghanistan, both in terms of aiding in their security needs but also aiding in their developmental needs. And I think that every country has to decide what's in their own national interests how they can best help in this effort. I haven't actually seen these remarks, in particular. But as you point out, they are the third-largest contributor, and we've been very appreciative of their assistance

QUESTION: Same subject.

MR. KELLY: Same subject?

QUESTION: Yes. This monitoring and verification mechanism is already in place. Is it effective now?

MR. KELLY: On our side, you mean?

QUESTION: Yes.

MR. KELLY: Yes, it is. I mean, we have a special inspector general in place, the special inspector general for Afghan reconstruction. That office has been in place for quite some time. We're in the process of going ministry by ministry to certify that they have the proper accounting procedures in place to receive aid directly. This is not only to improve transparency, but it's also to ensure they have the capacity to

receive this aid. We're also dramatically increasing the number of officers from the U.S. Agency for International Development who can get out into the field and actually see how the aid is being delivered. So we have some mechanisms already in place, but we're also looking to increase our own capacity to monitor the aid.

QUESTION: Yeah. But as you know, the major (inaudible) of U.S. aids goes to Afghanistan through the NGO sector, nonprofit sector. Only 30 percent goes through the Afghan Government. So what's the mechanism to verify and monitor the aid which goes through the nonprofit organizations?

MR. KELLY: Well, I think we have the same kind of monitoring structures in place for NGOs as well. I mean, we also want to make sure that they're – they have the proper accounting procedures in place. So it's, I think, a similar mechanism for them as well.

QUESTION: Currently, the ratio of aid going to Afghanistan to NGOs and the government is 70/30; 70 percent goes to the nonprofit and 30 percent to Afghan Government. Is there any move to change this imbalance of aid going to Afghanistan?

MR. KELLY: Well, I'm not sure whether or not it's imbalanced. But I know that we're looking to increase the capacity of the Afghan Government, not just in Kabul but also out in the regions as well. So I think we'll be looking to increase that proportion going to the government, as they are able to be certified that they have the capacity and the kind of accounting mechanisms that we need to have in place to actually deliver the aid. But it's not just – we're not just talking about the Afghan central government here. We're talking about also the local and provincial authorities as well.

QUESTION: So the local and provincial authorities will go directly to them or through – routed through the central government?

MR. KELLY: It's a good question. I'm not sure exactly. I mean, I'm sure that it has to be coordinated with the central government, but I'm not sure if it actually – the money actually flows through the central government.

QUESTION: On the theme of accountability, Senator Kerry has written a letter to the IG, and copied also to the Secretary, asking for a new investigation into Blackwater --

MR. KELLY: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- given recent developments. And he says in the letter that the director of defense trade controls has told a Foreign Relations Committee staff member that Blackwater is engaged in broad violations of export laws, unlicensed shipments of weapons to Iraq, and potentially other places. Do you know: (a) If the IG is going to conduct a new investigation or at least review whether Blackwater is still appropriate – or Xe Services – sorry --

MR. KELLY: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- is still an appropriate company to get contracts under the worldwide protective services – personal protective services scheme; and (b) – well, let's just stick it – stick with (a) for a moment.

MR. KELLY: Okay. We can get to (b), if you want, a little later. Yes, we – I mean, Matt, I'll just confirm we received the letter today. The Office of the Inspector General has the letter, and I'm sure the Secretary will see it as soon as she gets back. These are very serious allegations. We look forward to learning more from the committee about these allegations, because I think the letter says that they have new information. And so we're looking forward to a discussion of that, and we're looking forward, I think, to – in general, to a discussion of the issue of contractors. I think you've seen the Secretary has said before that we're concerned about our dependency on contractors.

QUESTION: Well, why is –

MR. KELLY: But at the same time, though, we're also – we have to – we have a need to provide protection for our people overseas. So it's a – there are these two imperatives that we need to balance out.

QUESTION: Well, (b) – then the (b) part of the question then is: You are not aware of this new information? And do you know anything about --

MR. KELLY: Well, I'm not sure what he means by new information.

QUESTION: The directorate's acting director of compliance telling them that Blackwater engaged in broad violations of export laws; are you aware of that? It seems to me that you would be.

MR. KELLY: I think we're – well, we're – we've seen the – I mean, there have been stories in the media about this – about these allegations.

QUESTION: Forget about the – forget about stories in the media. I'm just talking about the letter from Senator Kerry, who is the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, saying that the directorate's acting director of compliance told the committee staff that Blackwater, quote, "engaged in broad violations," end quote, of export laws. Do you know anything about that?

MR. KELLY: I don't know that the Department of State has this information at the present time.

QUESTION: He said unlicensed shipments went beyond weapons for personal use by Blackwater Security personnel.

MR. KELLY: This sounds like something that probably --

QUESTION: All right. So you're not --

MR. KELLY: -- should be referred you to the Department of Justice.

QUESTION: This building is not privy to the information that Senator Kerry has?

MR. KELLY: I don't think that -- well, we are not aware of the specifics of these allegations.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you.

QUESTION: On a different subject?

MR. KELLY: Different subject? Okay.

QUESTION: Yeah, on Burma. Aung San Suu Kyi has returned a letter to the senior general Than Shwe about meeting him directly. And there are -- some statements have also come from the senior general and the military junta about possibilities of releasing Aung San Suu Kyi. Do you see any development -- positive development going on inside the country?

MR. KELLY: Well, we, of course, have started a new, very focused dialogue with the Government of Burma. This has been a dialogue that, as I say, is focused on the need for Burma to open up its political system to -- for more debate and discussion. And the -- I think the -- one of the best steps that they could take to show that they are willing to open up their system is to release political prisoners. There are over 2,000 of them. And of course, we've called, in particular, for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. And we're aware of this letter that she's written to the senior general, and we hope that this will be the beginning of a dialogue that will lead to her release.

Yeah. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Any updates on that transit agreement and how the operation's technical teams were doing?

MR. KELLY: They wrapped up today. They're on their way back. I understand that a second flight was conducted today. It landed in Bagram. For details on that, I think you have to go to my colleagues over at the Pentagon. And we look forward to many more such flights. And we also look forward to getting a debrief from the team when they get back.

QUESTION: Are there reasons to believe then that they will start on a regular basis then?

MR. KELLY: I hope so. But like I say, we need to talk to them when they get back. I don't have a complete readout of their trip.

Yeah.

QUESTION: On Venezuela?

MR. KELLY: On Venezuela.

QUESTION: Yeah. (inaudible) the friend of the freedom of expression, the president of Globovision Venezuela, the opposition channel, denounced yesterday that his human rights have been violated, and that could lead to an order of detention actually ordered by the president of Venezuela himself. Do you have any position, any comments on that?

MR. KELLY: Well, I think our position on freedom of the press in Venezuela has been very clear, that we call for a removal of the – of intimidation and other moves against the media there, particularly Globo. And I'm not aware of these most – more recent developments, but this is an important issue and we've been very forthright about our calls for more freedom of expression in Venezuela.

QUESTION: Do you have had the opportunity to speak to the government, to the Venezuelan Government, and to say what is your opinion towards --

MR. KELLY: I'm sure we have. I mean, we have an ambassador in Caracas and we have diplomatic contacts, and I'm sure we have had these kind of conversations privately as well through diplomatic channels.

Samir, you've got – your hand is up highest, so we'll let you ask the next one.

QUESTION: Okay. Palestinian President Abbas told BBC today that he doesn't want to go to the Security Council to ask for support for a declaration of a Palestinian state in a unilateral way, but he would like to ask for a resolution to reaffirm the endorsement of the Roadmap which is endorsed by Resolution 1515. Will the U.S. support this move, or do you – will you object to it?

MR. KELLY: Well, we – it's hard for me to say if we'll object to a move, not having seen the details of the resolution. But what you've just outlined to me is what we support too. We support both sides abiding by their agreements under the Roadmap. We do not support unilateral moves by one side or the other. We believe that these differences have to be worked out through bilateral dialogue.

QUESTION: But these things does not contradict U.S. policies in the past. Like Resolution 1515, the U.S. voted it, supported it.

MR. KELLY: Yeah. I'm – Samir, I'm sorry, I don't have Resolution 1515 in front of me. If – we'll get you – you want a very specific response to --

QUESTION: No, no, just reaction, a general reaction, because he's calling only for reaffirmation of the Roadmap, that Resolution 1515 endorses the Roadmap at the Security Council.

MR. KELLY: Right. Yeah. Well, Samir, I can't give you a response to some – to a resolution that I haven't seen, to a text that we haven't seen. Once we see the text, we're happy to give a response to it.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. KELLY: Yeah.

QUESTION: Egypt has recalled its ambassador to Algeria, following incidents surrounding a soccer game between these two nations in Sudan. Do you have any comment on that?

MR. KELLY: I haven't seen that report, so I don't have any comment on it. Sorry, Christophe.

Yes.

QUESTION: Could I ask you about Iran? The President promised consequences when the Iranians rejected the nuclear fuel deal, and there's a meeting tomorrow of the P-5 plus Germany in Brussels. What is the best that you can expect out of that, given that your Russian counterpart said that there are no prospects for new sanctions? Are you just going to be satisfied with adding names to asset freezes and travel bans?

MR. KELLY: Well, first of all, let's talk for a minute about what's going to happen tomorrow. There is going to be a meeting that's been called by Javier Solana of the political directors of the P-5+1, political directors or their representatives. And I think that they're going to basically talk about three or four things.

One is, of course, that Iran, as the President said, is having trouble getting to yes on the proposal that the IAEA has put forward on sending their low-enriched uranium out of the country, so they're going to discuss responses to that. They have also not been responsive to the invitation of the P-5+1 itself to sit down again and talk about the nuclear issue. They're going to discuss the recent IAEA report of noncompliance and the ramifications of that and what can be expected in the meeting of the Board of Governors of the IAEA on November 26th.

And then finally, and last but not least at all, is to talk about what the President said that we have to start turning our attention to, and that's developing a package of

measures that will show to Iran the seriousness of the consequences of their noncompliance with the requirements of the international community. And I think that the important thing here is that there is unity in the P-5+1 of the overall goal of getting Iran to live up to its obligations, and there is a commitment by all members of the P-5+1 to this dual track, which includes not only engagement but also pressure.

So as the President said, over the next few weeks, we're going to consult with our partners and allies about what we can do to show Iran that their nonresponsiveness, if you will, is – will have real consequences.

QUESTION: So the open-ended application of these consequences that the President mentioned seems to be – I mean, it'll just go on and on. I mean, will --

MR. KELLY: Well, it's not open-ended. No, I mean, he was very clear that this is not – this is not open-ended, that there is an end to this. And I think he's pointed to the end of this year, which is coming very quickly.

QUESTION: So we're still on to the end of this year? That's still the deadline for that?

MR. KELLY: Well, this is a multilateral approach, and I – we will have to do this in consultation with our allies and partners. But I think that everybody realizes that we have to approach this with some urgency.

Peter.

QUESTION: Yes, Ian, you mentioned a package of measures. If you don't mind, could you name just some?

MR. KELLY: Can I name them?

QUESTION: Yes.

MR. KELLY: I'm going to decline from naming them at the present time. This is something that's going to be discussed within the P-5+1 and within various multilateral fora. But I'd – it's – it wouldn't be productive for me to get into specifics right now.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. KELLY: Much as you'd like me to.

QUESTION: Yeah. That's fine.

QUESTION: I have a question on next week's visit by the Indian prime minister, Dr. Singh. Is there any event scheduled here by Secretary Clinton (inaudible)? Would you be able to announce them?

MR. KELLY: There will be – yes, there will be an event here. I believe it's a lunch, but off the top of my head I don't the – I can't remember the date of it. I think it's Tuesday, but I'm not a hundred percent sure.

QUESTION: And there will be separate meeting between Secretary Clinton and the prime minister?

MR. KELLY: Within this event here, and there may be another one as well. But the Secretary, of course, will be – she will be in the meetings at the White House that the President will have, bilateral meetings and other events at the White House. But there will be a bilateral meeting between her and Mr. Singh, and also a – she will host a lunch here as well for his delegation.

QUESTION: And what are the issues do you think would be – would come up for discussion?

MR. KELLY: Well, I think that regional issues will be very important, particularly since the Secretary has just come back from Afghanistan, so they'll want to talk about issues related to South Asia. She'll want to talk about the State Department's role in the Strategic Dialogue with India, so we'll want to get into more detail on how we carry through with that. And just a whole range of diplomatic issues.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. KELLY: Dave.

QUESTION: Yeah. Human Rights Watch had a report out yesterday, said basically that the Cuban Government's human rights record has not gotten any better under Raul Castro, and in fact, in some aspects, is worse in that they're doing some preemptive arrests of people they think might violate whatever order is there. I'm just wondering, has this given the Administration any cause to rethink some of the contacts that it's been having with the Cuban Government?

MR. KELLY: Well, I think first of all, we share many of the concerns put forth in this report, particularly regarding the incarceration of political prisoners as well as actions that have violated the human rights of Cuban citizens and have basically limited the exercise of what we call or we would consider fundamental freedoms.

We – human rights is at the center of our Cuban policy. We are interested in promoting human rights for all Cubans. We have begun an engagement with Cuba of – in areas of national interest and mutual concern. We've also launched some initiatives creating opportunities for Cuban civil society to more easily receive

information and interact with their family and also with Cubans who live in the United States. This is the increasing the mail service and increasing telephone service.

So this is a real priority for the United States, and it will continue to be so.

QUESTION: One other – Human Rights Watch recommended that, again, the United States sort of abandon a general embargo against Cuba and get together with other interested countries and just basically issue an ultimatum on Cuba to release all political prisoners by a date certain or face sort of targeted sanctions. Is that an idea that has any appeal to the Administration?

MR. KELLY: Yeah, I haven't seen the exact recommendations of the Human Rights Watch. I think you've heard me say before that we've made some gestures to Cuba, and we are waiting to see Cuba make some – take some concrete steps to show that they are also serious in opening up their society and opening up exchanges and interactions with the U.S. And I think that we need to see some more concrete steps before we take any actions like that.

QUESTION: Is that – human rights in the hemisphere?

MR. KELLY: Sure.

QUESTION: I believe last week, or maybe a little bit before then, you were asked about human rights abuses in Honduras, and reports from the same organization that Dave just mentioned as well as Amnesty International and local human rights groups who have catalogued 4,234 violations since the coup, including 21 murders, or executions as they call them.

There are growing calls from trade union movement here for the U.S. not to recognize the elections unless these things are corrected. Is this something of concern to you guys?

MR. KELLY: It is. It has been and remains a concern. There have been a number of human rights violations since the coup, and we have consistently called on the regime to respect the rights of individual citizens. And we've been particularly concerned about some of the moves against the media. And the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa is closely monitoring the situation. It has reported back to us about a number of allegations of arbitrary arrests, disproportionate use of force, and, in particular, restrictions on freedom of expression. So yeah, we are concerned about it.

QUESTION: Well, what are you doing about it?

MR. KELLY: Well, I just laid out to you that we're monitoring very, very closely and we're engaged with the government of Mr. Micheletti to express our concerns.

QUESTION: Right, but do you think that this has any impact on whether the election can be free and fair?

MR. KELLY: I mean, an election being recognized as free and fair has many different aspects. The lack of freedom of media, of course, is an important – would be an important indicator of this. But as I've said before, I think we need to look at exactly how the elections are conducted. But it is fair to say that we are concerned about the human rights situation.

QUESTION: All right. Well, I guess what I'm trying to get at is does this play any role in whether you will recognize the election, setting aside the whole Zelaya reinstatement?

MR. KELLY: Well --

QUESTION: Or is it a case where, "Well, there may be some abuses going on and it may – but it's not going to – we're still going to recognize the election?"

MR. KELLY: We'll have to see how it – how they're actually conducted. Part of it, of course, is the run-up to the elections themselves. It's not just the day of the election. A big part of whether or not elections are free and fair --

QUESTION: That's exactly why I'm asking the question. In the run-up to the election, so it --

MR. KELLY: Yeah, yeah. Well, sure, I mean, we'll look at restrictions on the media, particularly restrictions of access to candidates in the campaign before the elections themselves.

Yes.

QUESTION: While we're on Honduras, you seem to have indicated this week that although the United States still thinks that the restitution of Zelaya to the presidency is key for the October 30th accord to be played out, you indicated also that it doesn't really matter when the congressional vote takes place. Does this mean that if the congress drags its feet on voting to approve the accord or not, that as long as Zelaya occupies the presidency for a day, an hour, a minute before the new president takes over, that this is okay with Washington?

MR. KELLY: Well, I think first of all, the vote to decide to restore Zelaya is important. But the accord lays out one very important thing that has to happen before the elections, and that's the establishment of a government of national unity and reconciliation before the election. So I just wanted to emphasize that that really is – if you're looking at this as a step-by-step process, that's one step that we are really focusing on. They've already missed that deadline. The accord, I think, really only

had one deadline. The October 30 accord had one deadline and that was November 5th to form this government of national unity and reconciliation. And that deadline has passed.

I think it's important – I don't want to overemphasize the importance of it – but it's important that they have taken action to set a date for the consideration of the restoration, and that's December 2nd. So I would point to that. But this formation of the national unity government is important because part of this whole process is reconciliation. For Honduras to have a government that really reflects the will of the people, we need to have this process of reconciliation between the Zelaya camp and the de facto camp. So that's one thing that Craig Kelly was really focused on when he was down there yesterday and the day before, was to get some movement on this.

QUESTION: Yeah, thank you.

MR. KELLY: Yeah, Matt, go ahead.

QUESTION: I've just got a couple of loose ends here. Do you have any comment on the rising tensions between Russia, Georgia, and the kidnappings of people that have been going on in Ossetia and Abkhazia?

MR. KELLY: Well, I think we're – we are concerned that the situation down there remains tense, remains unresolved in many ways. There are parts of the ceasefire agreement of last year, last August, that haven't been completely implemented. And there is a process for the two sides to talk these issues out, the Geneva process. And that, I think, is one good forum to try and resolve these issues. But yeah, we are concerned about the tension in the South Caucasus.

QUESTION: When was the last time that that met in Geneva?

MR. KELLY: That's a good question.

STAFF: It was recently, I think a few weeks ago.

MR. KELLY: Yeah, a few weeks ago.

QUESTION: All right. And then do you have any indication from the Iraqi Government at all that they're getting involved in the case of the detained hikers in Iran?

MR. KELLY: I don't have anything on that, I'm afraid.

QUESTION: All right. Okay. And lastly, tomorrow is the three-month anniversary of al-Megrahi's release on compassionate grounds. And Senator Schumer has written a letter to Gordon Brown with a rather interesting suggestion that – or not suggestion, a demand that since the guy isn't dead yet and they said that he only had three months to live, he should be returned to – immediately returned back to Britain to

go to jail. Schumer said – he said in his statement from his office, which actually misspells Lockerbie, unfortunately – (laughter) – says that since --

MR. KELLY: Hey, can you release the text of that?

QUESTION: -- since he has outlived the term of his release, and there has been speculation about exaggerations of the severity of his condition, the British Government should seek his immediate transfer back to prison in Scotland. Do you share Senator Schumer's belief that since he hasn't died yet, he should be sent back?

MR. KELLY: Well, you know what our stance on this has been, is that we believed all along that Mr. Megrahi should have served out his sentence in Scotland.

QUESTION: Well, no, but now this is – this three-month thing, I'm just wondering if – would the U.S. Government join in with Senator Schumer in demanding that since he's still alive, he should go back to prison?

MR. KELLY: Well, we'd be happy to get Senator Schumer's points of view on this. I haven't seen the letter, but I'd be happy to have discussions with him.

QUESTION: All right. I'll give it to you.

MR. KELLY: Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 2:17 p.m.)

(end transcript)

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*WPD510 11/20/2009

Transcript: Remarks by President Obama and South Korean President Lee (Obama says U.S.-South Korean alliance has never been stronger) (252)

(begin transcript)

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
November 20, 2009

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT OBAMA

AND PRESIDENT LEE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA
BEFORE BILATERAL MEETING

Blue House
Seoul, Republic of Korea
November 19, 2009

11:15 A.M. KST

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, Mr. President -- I was telling the President, and I think the delegation would agree, that this was the most spectacular ceremony for a state visit that we've been involved with since we've traveled.

And I was saying that I especially enjoyed the traditional dress of some of the soldiers.

PRESIDENT LEE: (As translated.) But traditional uniforms are quite difficult to fight in. (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT OBAMA: That's true, that's true.

PRESIDENT LEE: Well, first of all, Mr. President, welcome. And you're bringing very nice weather with you, because up until yesterday it was sub-zeros, frigid cold. (Laughter.)

Well, once again, Mr. President, welcome to the Asian region, and, of course, welcome to Korea. I know that your visit to Japan and China has been very successful.

And Mr. President, as we all like to say, you saved the best for last. (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, Mr. President, let me just say that we have been so gratified by the warmth with which we've been received here in the Republic of Korea.

And I think there's every indication that the alliance between our two countries has never been stronger.

END 11:17 A.M. KST

(end transcript)

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*WPD511 11/20/2009

Text: U.N. Calls on Iran to Address Serious Human Rights Violations
(U.S. welcomes U.N. resolution against Iran's human rights practices) (265)

(begin text)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
November 20, 2009

STATEMENT BY ROBERT WOOD, DEPUTY SPOKESMAN

U.N. Calls on Iran to Address Serious Human Rights Violations

The United States welcomes the resolution passed today by the United Nations calling upon the Government of Iran to respect its human rights obligations fully. In addition to longstanding concerns about the human rights situation in Iran, the resolution expresses deep concern about the brutal response of Iranian authorities to peaceful demonstrations in the wake of the June 12 election. It calls on the Government of Iran to abolish torture and arbitrary imprisonment, as well as any executions, including stoning, carried out without due process of law. The resolution also calls on Iran to cooperate fully with and admit entry to the UN Special Rapporteur on torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance.

This resolution demonstrates that the international community is deeply concerned over the deteriorating human rights situation in Iran and the government's failure to uphold its obligations under its own constitution and international human rights law. Those in Iran who are trying to exercise their universal rights should know that the world continues to bear witness and their voices are being heard.

(end text)

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)
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*WPD512 11/20/2009

Text: Appointment of President of European Council, High Representative
(Clinton congratulates President Van Rompuy and High Representative Ashton) (257)

(begin text)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesman

November 19, 2009

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY CLINTON

Naming of New President of the European Council and EU High Representative

Today's appointment of a permanent President of the European Council and a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is a milestone for Europe and for its role in the world.

I warmly congratulate President Van Rompuy and my new counterpart High Representative Ashton. I look forward to working closely with them to strengthen and broaden our partnership -- from achieving stability in Afghanistan to securing Iranian compliance with its nonproliferation obligations and promoting a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, among many other shared objectives.

I also want to salute Javier Solana and Benita Ferrero-Waldner for their service as High Representative and External Relations Commissioner. These talented diplomats have been trusted friends and valued partners.

The United States and Europe form a community of values. We are united by our deep commitment to freedom, security, human rights, the rule of law, and open markets. Our 800 million citizens are bound together by enduring links of culture and commerce, by our shared history and our common hopes for the future. We are working together as partners to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of the 21st century. With the appointment of these distinguished leaders, I am more confident than ever that together we can build a more peaceful and prosperous world.

(end text)

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*WPD513 11/20/2009

Text: Secretary Clinton on Republic of Suriname's Independence Day

(U.S. congratulates the people of Suriname on 34 years of independence) (218)

(begin text)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
November 19, 2009

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY CLINTON

Republic of Suriname's Independence Day

On behalf of President Obama and the people of the United States, I congratulate the people of the Republic of Suriname as they celebrate 34 years as an independent nation on November 25. Our two nations are united by enduring links of culture and commerce, and by our shared commitment to advance peace, democracy, and human rights across the Americas and the world. Our partnership is based on mutual respect and mutual interest, and we are working together to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of the 21st century – from spurring economic growth and protecting the environment to promoting public health and regional security.

This is an occasion to honor Suriname's cultural heritage and reaffirm our faith in its people and its future. I offer warm wishes to everyone participating in the festivities, especially the runners in the Suriname Independence Day Marathon. I am proud that several U.S. national guardsmen from South Dakota will represent the United States in the race as participants in the Suriname-South Dakota Partnership, an example of the powerful bonds between our people.

(end text)

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)
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*WPD514 11/20/2009

Text: Presidential Proclamation for Entrepreneurship Week 2009
(Obama renews U.S. commitment to support American entrepreneurs) (415)

(begin text)

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
November 19, 2009

NATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WEEK, 2009
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

Throughout our history, American entrepreneurs have been an effective force for innovation at home and around the world. From the airplane to the Internet search engine to new tractors, they have pioneered technologies, products, and processes that have improved lives and shaped the course of our future. Today, they are fueling our economy with their creativity, tireless work ethic, and risk-taking spirit. During National Entrepreneurship Week, we renew our commitment to supporting American entrepreneurs, including social entrepreneurs, who are spreading opportunity and prosperity across our Nation.

Entrepreneurs are the engine of job creation in America, generating millions of good jobs. Many begin with nothing more than a good idea, and translate new products and services into vibrant businesses. To secure our Nation's future prosperity, we must ensure that our entrepreneurs have the tools they need to survive and thrive.

My Administration is working to provide opportunities and conditions for entrepreneurs to succeed. We are supporting the flow of credit by increasing loan guarantees and reducing borrowing fees to help more Americans start businesses. We also made the Research and Experimentation Tax Credit permanent to help burgeoning companies afford the high costs of developing new products and technologies. The recently formed Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the Department of Commerce is building on these efforts with new policies and initiatives to unleash creativity and innovation, as well as turn inspired ideas into new employment-generating businesses.

Our Nation led the world's economies in the 20th century because we led the world in innovation. To strengthen our position in the 21st century, we must rededicate ourselves to harnessing the creative spirit that has made America great.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 16 through November 22, 2009, as National Entrepreneurship Week. I call upon all Americans to recognize the important contributions of entrepreneurs to our economy.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fourth.

BARACK OBAMA

(end text)

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*WPD515 11/20/2009

U.S. Outreach to Asia, November 2009

(Key documents, remarks by Obama, Clinton during their travel to the region) (445)

Following is a list of statements, transcripts, fact sheets and other documents related to visits to East Asian nations by President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton during November 2009:

- U.S., Indonesia, Singapore Outline Road Ahead for APEC (
<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091112170650eaifas0.9972498.html&distid=ucs>)
- Remarks by Secretary Clinton at APEC Singapore Conference (
<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091112145219xjsnommis0.4588434.html&distid=ucs>)
- Clinton on U.S. Relief Efforts, Book Fair Tour in Philippines (
<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091112144213eaifas0.5685999.html&distid=ucs>)
- Contributions by the Government of Japan to Afghanistan, Pakistan (
<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091112115940xjsnommis0.4435236.html&distid=ucs>)
- U.S.-Japan Cooperation on Clean Energy Technologies (
<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091113114034xjsnommis0.6009027.html&distid=ucs>)
- Statement on United States Response to Asia-Pacific Disasters (
<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091113121705xjsnommis1.309931e-02.html&distid=ucs>)
- U.S.-Japan Joint Message on Climate Change Negotiations (
<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091113150302xjsnommis0.5607111.html&distid=ucs>)
- Remarks by President Obama, Japanese Prime Minister Hatoyama (
<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091113145753xjsnommis1.714724e-02.html&distid=ucs>)
- U.S.-Japan Statement on Creating World Without Nuclear Weapons (
<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091113160222xjsnommis0.4191248.html&distid=ucs>)

- Secretary Clinton's Interview with Voice of America (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091113164517eaifas0.8055318.html&distid=ucs>)
- President Obama on Issues Affecting Asia-Pacific Nations (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091113213142ptellivremos0.6597515.html>)
- President Obama's Remarks at APEC Leaders' Summit (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091115102419ptellivremos0.1796991.html&distid=ucs>)
- Remarks by President Obama and Indonesian President Yudhoyono (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091115110224ptellivremos0.234173.html&distid=ucs>)
- White House Press Briefing on APEC Summit and Medvedev Meeting (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091115105208ptellivremos0.1471979.html&distid=ucs>)
- Remarks by President Obama, Thai Prime Minister Vejjajiva (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091115104036ptellivremos0.774624.html&distid=ucs>)
- Statements by President Obama and President Medvedev (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091115103149ptellivremos0.0658533.html&distid=ucs>)
- White House Press Briefing on President's Trip to Singapore (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091115101536ptellivremos0.3850977.html&distid=ucs>)
- Declaration by APEC Leaders (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091115100228ptellivremos0.9120905.html&distid=ucs>)
- Statement by APEC Leaders (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091115094726ptellivremos0.4447901.html&distid=ucs>)
- Joint Statement from First ASEAN-U.S. Leaders' Meeting (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091116162427xjsnommis0.2769281.html&distid=ucs>)
- Remarks by Secretary Clinton at Shanghai Expo's USA Pavilion (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091116151443eaifas0.4965937.html&distid=ucs>)

- President Obama at Town Hall Meeting in Shanghai (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091116095135eaifas0.900326.html&distid=ucs>)
- Key Accomplishments of APEC Leaders Meeting in Singapore (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091116125359eaifas0.491604.html&distid=ucs>)
- Joint Statement by President Obama, Chinese President Hu in China (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091117155448eaifas0.846615.html&distid=ucs>)
- Remarks by Obama, Chinese President Hu Before Meeting in Beijing (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091117111529eaifas4.663813e-02.html&distid=ucs>)
- Establishment of U.S.-China Clean Energy Research Center (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091117134025eaifas7.440448e-04.html&distid=ucs>)
- Statement on U.S.-China Energy Efficiency Action Plan (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091117155603xjsnommis8.419001e-02.html&distid=ucs>)
- Announcements on U.S.-China Clean Energy Programs (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091117145751xjsnommis0.63081.html&distid=ucs>)
- Statement on U.S.-China Shale Gas Resource Initiative (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091117145333xjsnommis0.4233515.html&distid=ucs>)
- U.S.-China Renewable Energy Partnership (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091117133515eaifas0.9579279.html&distid=ucs>)
- Launch of U.S.-China Electric Vehicles Initiative (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091117133641eaifas0.9047052.html&distid=ucs>)
- U.S.-China Cooperation on 21st-Century Coal (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091117135945eaifas0.8758356.html&distid=ucs>)

- U.S. Officials Brief on Obama-Hu Meeting in China (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/200911171122852xjsnommis9.922427e-02.html&distid=ucs>)
- Remarks by Obama, Chinese President Hu Before Expanded Meeting (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091117111140eaifas0.1786768.html&distid=ucs>)
- Joint Statement on U.S.-China Relationship (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091117110726eaifas0.730343.html&distid=ucs>)
- Obama's Remarks in a Meeting with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091118102837eaifas0.379635.html&distid=ucs>)
- Statement on President Obama's Visit to China (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091118101503eaifas7.535952e-02.html&distid=ucs>)
- President Obama's Interview with Xiang Xi of Southern Weekly (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091119104250xjsnommis0.7479822.html&distid=ucs>)
- Remarks by President Obama and South Korean President Lee (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091120113354xjsnommis0.2482569.html&distid=ucs>)

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