

## Digest of the U.S. State Department's Daily Press Briefing February 5, 2009



### Secretary of State to make first trip to South East Asia

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton will depart Washington, D.C. on tour of Asia Feb. 15.

The Secretary of State will visit Japan Feb. 16 – 18, Indonesia Feb. 18 – 19, Republic of Korea Feb. 19 – 20, and China Feb. 20 – 22.

### North Korea

Secretary of State's Asian tour to be part of the Six-party framework.

The 'Six-party framework' to pressure the DPRK to abandon its nuclear program will be on her agenda. The Six-Party Talks began in August 2003 as a multilateral approach to ending North Korea's nuclear program. The member states of the Six-party framework are: the United States, North Korea, China, Russia, South Korea, and Japan.

### Indonesia

Islam and the Peace Corps on the agenda.

Indonesia was placed on the agenda because it is "the largest Muslim country in the world and the Secretary feels it's important that we need to reach out and reach out early to Indonesia," Press Secretary Wood said this morning. Mr. Wood also indicated the Secretary of State will likely raise the question of reactivating the Peace Corps there.

### China

In China the Secretary of State hopes to engage the help of China in resolving a number of humanitarian issues in the world. "We want to see how we can partner with the Chinese to try and help resolve some of these horrible and horrific humanitarian situations we have...the subjects of human rights and Tibet always come up in conversations with our Chinese counterparts...So I would suspect that those issues could very well come up," Mr. Wood replied to questions from the press. Secretary of State to investigate whether or not Congress' "Buy American" package will violate WTO agreements between the two countries.

### Afghanistan

Richard Holbrooke the point man.

Members of the press asked the Press Secretary why the Secretary of State had not chosen to make her first trip as Secretary of State to South Asia, particularly to India, in order to address the growing problems in Afghanistan. To this inquiry Mr. Wood replied, "Ambassador Holbrooke...will be on his way to the region from the Munich conference...she will eventually be going to the region, but the fact that we've got a very distinguished negotiator...Richard Holbrooke, going to the region, that's very significant as well."

## Guantanamo Bay

State Department implies that intelligence sharing agreements between the U.K. and the United States have gagged British courts on releasing details of the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay prison.

Q. “There are communications between U.S. and UK intelligence agents that describe what happened – apparently describe what happened to this man when he was held in detention, which a UK court would like to make public, and the UK Government is preventing them from doing so, saying it is because the U.S. Government doesn’t want them made public. And it’s not clear to us whether or not the U.S. Government, under an Obama Administration, really does want these things to be kept secret.”

A. “President Obama has – as you know, through an executive order, has, you know, basically requested a review of the detention of, you know – or should I say the detention conditions at Guantanamo. But beyond that, I just don’t have anything more I can give you on it.”

## Iran

Russia to help Iran activate N. plant at Bushehr on the Persian Gulf in southwestern Iran.

## Kyrgyzstan

United States has not been officially notified that it must close the NATO air base at Manas near the capital Bishkek. Negotiations to keep the base open are ongoing.

## Ethiopia

No details on Foreign Service officer allegedly killed there.

## United Nations at Geneva

The United Nations mission at Geneva reviewing human rights records around the world, U.S. seat there has been empty.

Q. “Human rights organizations say that the United States seat has been empty this week, including during the review of Russia’s human rights record. And I gather this is one of the only forums in the UN context in which countries can be asked direct questions about their human rights records by other UN members... why has the United States not been present and participating... does the U.S. plan to participate?”

A. “We’re currently looking at what our policies are likely to be toward the UN Human Rights Council...taking a close look at the institution and its record. The President and the Secretary have made very clear that we want to fully engage and make reforms of the overall...international human rights system.”

Q. “The United States took a decision to stop participating in the commission’s work...any country can come and ask questions during the sort of UPR process. And the human rights groups are perplexed that the Administration and the U.S. Government, which has a longstanding policy on human rights around the world, wouldn’t participate, which it can do; even if it is not actively a part of the commission, any country can come and speak... has a policy decision been made not to take part in this process until you have decided the broader question of how and whether you will work with the commission?”

A. “We need to take a close look...at the Human Rights Commission...we want to make sure that we have a very coherent, cohesive policy with regard to engaging the UN and other actors in the international human rights system...We’re not trying to send any signals at this moment one way or the other.”

Although China’s record on human rights is scheduled to be on the agenda next week, when asked if the United States intended to participate in the review of China’s human rights record, or to speak on the issue of human rights in China, the spokesman for the State Department replied, “we don’t know.” The reporter then redirected the question to pertain to the scheduling of Ms. Clinton’s trip to China the week following the human rights review.

Q. “Review of the UPR that is for selected countries. China, I believe, is next week. Yeah. She’s going to China the week after that... And I’m just wondering if there will be a – if the decision – the review that you’re talking about will be completed in time... for you to participate or not participate... the President and the Secretary both campaigned on, you know, making human rights a priority, it’s just a little surprising that there hasn’t been anything – they haven’t made even the effort to show up.”

A. “When something’s a priority, you don’t rush to make a decision on it.”

Q. “I take it there’s been no decision yet on the Durban conference?”

A. “Not yet.”

The Durban Conference will be held in Geneva April 20-24. The Durban

Conference is a follow-up to the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (WCAR). The UNCHR is responsible for organizing and convening the event. Israel and the United States condemned the First Durban Conference, calling it an instrument of racism itself for allowing the slogan “Zionism is racism” to be raised there, and for war crimes charges to be leveled against Israel, and for participants of the conference comparing Israel to South Africa under Apartheid rule.

### Al-Qaeda

State Department confirms Al-Qaeda is active in a number of places besides Yemen.

### Cyprus

State Department differs questions on the fate of an Iranian ship alleged to be laden with weapons and held at port in Cyprus to the Pentagon.

No clarification as to whether or not the Iranian ship that docked at the Port of Beirut Jan. 29 with humanitarian aid for Gaza is the same ship intercepted by the US Navy in the Red Sea Jan. 27 or a different ship.

---

Al-Masakin News Agency

<http://almasakinnewsagency.wordpress.com/>