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*WPD501 02/06/2009

U.S. Opposes Russian Military Bases in Abkhazia, South Ossetia
(Georgian territorial integrity must be respected, U.S. official says) (547)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Russian efforts to establish three military bases in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia could prove provocative and destabilizing, a senior U.S. official says.

The United States has noted with concern press reports of Russian plans for the bases, U.S. Charge d'Affaires Kyle Scott said at a meeting of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna, Austria, on February 5.

"These steps, if confirmed, would be provocative and destabilizing, and would undercut international efforts through the Geneva [peace] talks to reduce tensions in the region."

And the bases would compound Russia's breaches of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Scott said. Establishing the bases would deepen Russia's violations of the August 12, 2008, cease-fire agreement, in which Russia agreed to withdraw its forces to their pre-conflict positions, he said.

"Also of serious concern are reports of frequent Russian helicopter flights outside the South Ossetian region of Georgia," Scott said.

OSCE and European Union monitors in Georgia reported January 26 that Russian military helicopters were seen flying into Georgian-controlled airspace outside of South Ossetia, which is one of two breakaway regions in Georgia. Russian helicopters were also observed flying over Georgian villages well outside of the two breakaway regions.

"These incidents clearly underscore the need for an OSCE monitoring presence with uninhibited access to the whole of Georgia, including South Ossetia," Scott said in remarks before the OSCE Permanent Council meeting.

Russia and Georgia fought a five-day conflict over the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions in August 2008. Following a cease-fire, Russia recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent nations and has continued to occupy the two regions with heavy military forces. Only one other nation, Nicaragua, also recognized the regions.

Russian news agencies reported January 26 that the Russian navy plans to build a base in Abkhazia, which borders the Black Sea. Russia has been searching for another naval base location in the event that it loses the rights to base naval ships at its main Black Sea base in Sevastopol, Ukraine. The lease on that base expires in 2017.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Bryza told Reuters in a January 31 interview that “the possible deployment of a naval base in Abkhazia, an air base in Abkhazia and a military base in South Ossetia seems to be moving in the wrong direction. Russia pledged to reduce its troops to the levels and locations of before the Russia-Georgia war.”

Scott also said that continued kidnappings and killings of Georgian police officers and civilians demonstrate the increasing need for more OSCE and EU civilian monitors.

“We remain convinced that now is the time for more, not less, international presence, to help deter violence, to ensure the safety and protection of civilians, to promote human rights, to encourage dialogue and reconciliation, and to monitor the implementation of the August 12 cease-fire and subsequent agreements,” Scott said.

Scott said the United States expects Russia will implement its commitments under the agreements.

What foreign affairs actions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov’s blog (<http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/>).

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*WPD502 02/06/2009

Navy Ships Offer Training, Deliver Supplies to the Americas
(Maritime services and civilians benefit from information, donations) (748)

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
Staff Writer

Washington — The U.S. Navy is pursuing an active partnership with nations throughout the Americas, and a tour by the USS Swift is one of its most recent manifestations.

The high-speed vessel has been to Panama twice since the beginning of the year, training students in the National Air and Maritime Service and the national police. U.S. Navy personnel have taught courses on waterborne security, small boat navigation and repair as well as port security. After completing instruction, the Panamanians will know how to conduct seaborne escort missions and high-speed evasive maneuvers.

The U.S. sailors also offered a life-saving course and distributed \$182,000 in medical supplies, surgical instruments and clothing.

During an earlier stop in Colombia, Swift sailors and members of the Colombian navy together spruced up an old school in the coastal city of Cartagena, scraping and painting the walls for an excited group of kindergarten and elementary school children. For some American sailors, it was an opportunity to break away from typical tourist diversions, form new friendships and make a difference in a local community.

Before the school rehab, Swift crew members turned over a ton of medical supplies to a Colombian charity for distribution. Under the Project Handclasp program, U.S. naval vessels transport donated humanitarian goods in unused cargo space and deliver them at scheduled ports of call.

Training was also offered on how to use nonlethal weapons to control crowds — a fancy way to describe improving security through the use of pepper spray and tight anti-riot personnel formations.

PERSONNEL TRAIN FOR DISASTER, TOURIST PROTECTION

The Swift's five-month deployment to seven countries is part of a broader program known as the Southern Partnership Station, or, in Navy parlance, "SPS." Every year the Navy sends ships to Central America, South America and the Caribbean to participate with partner nations in missions aimed at developing and testing the ability of civil and maritime services to respond to any number of situations.

Sharing expertise is an invaluable way to promote military-to-military communications, in the view of the U.S. military. Such sharing also improves regional security needed to deal with transnational challenges, such as a colossal disaster, that are too great for a single nation to handle.

During the Swift's visit to Barbados, the focus was on subjects including harbor and airport security and small arms marksmanship. The Barbadian Royal Defense Forces were joined by personnel from Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda, and St. Lucia for the port-security portion of the training — a subject that is crucial for the tourism industry. The program generates a beneficial ripple effect as newly trained personnel go back home and set up their own training programs.

Hands-on training in Barbados and aboard the Swift included pier, vehicle and container inspections and warehouse profiling, as well as anti-terrorism techniques.

The Swift still has scheduled port calls in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. It is carrying personnel from the Navy's Expeditionary Training Command, the Naval Investigation Service Security Training and Assessment Team, and the Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group as well as many information system technicians to help install and train partner nations on a new computer-based vessel identification program.

During a stop in Port Antonio this year, the Jamaican Defense Force talked about counternarcotics missions and real-world problems. Swift teams were able to tailor training to the Jamaicans' specific needs.

In 2008, the Swift stopped in El Salvador, where combat leadership training was one of a number of specialized offerings. Swift Commander Christopher Barnes said the training experience was meant to build lasting partnerships, establish enduring relationships and enhance maritime security.

The Southern Partnership Station initiative operates under the direction of the U.S. Southern Command based in Miami. The command oversees U.S. contacts in 31 countries in the region.

The commander of the U.S. 4th Fleet said SPS 2009 "provides an excellent opportunity to facilitate cooperation, interaction and communication between regional partners' civil and maritime services." Rear Admiral Joseph Kernan said side-by-side training with partners will help build "strong relationships, improve interoperability and enhance regional maritime security." (See "Humanitarian Aid Key Component of Navy's New Maritime Strategy (<http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2008/February/20080214110541sjhtrop0.588772.html>).")

For more information about U.S. policy in the Americas, see The Americas: Partnering for Peace and Prosperity (<http://www.america.gov/world/americas.html>).

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*WPD503 02/06/2009

English language officer will discuss strategies for EFL class
(February 10 webchat with regional English language officer Damon Anderson) (253)

What builds confidence among students in an EFL classroom?

On February 10, at 1 a.m. EST (06:00 GMT, 14:00 Beijing), join the February English Roundtable with Damon Anderson to explore your suggestions for confidence-building strategies in the EFL classroom. Damon Anderson is the regional English language officer at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing.

Many students have the motivation to study English, but lack the confidence to use the language, even in the protected environment of the classroom. One result of this is a quiet class, or one in which students do not readily respond to prompts and questions from the teacher, or one in which the students are seemingly disengaged.

What could be the reasons for this lack of confidence? Could it be the teacher's heavy focus on correctness, rewarding only grammatically and syntactically correct responses? Could it be because mistakes are seen as negative and cause the one

who makes the mistake to appear foolish or to lose face with the rest of her/his peers?

What builds a student's confidence to use English in and outside the classroom? Is it success with communication in English?

This webchat will take place at <http://statedept.connectsolutions.com/englishroundtable>. No registration is needed. Simply choose "Enter as a Guest," type in your preferred screen name and join the discussion.

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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*WPD504 02/06/2009

Journalist Will Discuss What Obama's Election Says About America
(February 17 webchat with National Public Radio's Juan Williams) (289)

The election of President Obama signified a historic shift as Americans selected an African-American for the highest position in the U.S. government.

On February 17, at 9 a.m. EST (14:00 GMT), join noted journalist and political analyst Juan Williams for an online discussion of the significance of the election and what it says about America today.

Juan Williams is a leading news analyst and reporter for National Public Radio (NPR). He appears regularly on NPR's Morning Edition and Day to Day, speaking on a range of issues. From 2000 to 2001, he hosted NPR's call-in show Talk of the Nation as part of the yearlong series "The Changing Face of America," an in-depth look at how Americans were dealing with the transition to the 21st century. He is a regular contributing political analyst for the Fox News Channel. In addition to a 21-year career as a writer and reporter for the Washington Post, he received an Emmy award for television documentary writing for his work on the series that included "Politics — the New Black Power." He is also a prolific author, most recently publishing *Enough*, a book that explores the "culture of failure" that exists in today's African-American community. His other critically acclaimed books include *Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary* and *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954–1965*.

This webchat will take place at <http://statedept.connectsolutions.com/culture>. No registration is needed. Simply choose "Enter as a Guest," type in your preferred screen name and join the discussion.

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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*WPD505 02/06/2009

Biden Attends Munich Conference on NATO, European Security
(United States places emphasis on cooperation and partnerships) (748)

By Merle D. Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Vice President Biden will emphasize the need for strong partnerships to meet common challenges that are facing the United States and European allies when he addresses the 45th annual Munich Conference on Security Policy, which began February 6.

Biden's midday speech in Munich, Germany, is the first opportunity for the Obama administration to address both its approach to American foreign policy and the principles that will guide its policymaking. The speech, which the White House described to the news media as "dramatic," is emphasizing cooperation, diplomacy as a paramount force in American foreign relations, and multilateralism. The emphasis is designed to set a tone that is distinctly different from the previous administration.

The vice president "will urge cooperation among our allies to confront the security and economic issues of a post-Cold War and post-9/11 world," the White House said in a prepared statement.

In addition to his speech, Biden will hold bilateral meetings with German Chancellor Angela Merkel; Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk; Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko; French President Nicolas Sarkozy; British Foreign Secretary David Miliband; NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer; and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the White House said February 6. Both Miliband and Steinmeier recently met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in Washington.

Before heading back to the United States February 8, Biden will also hold bilateral meetings with Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili as well as Russian Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov.

Biden, the former chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, will be accompanied by National Security Adviser James Jones; Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg; Army General David Petraeus, who commands the U.S. Central Command and is responsible for the Middle East and South Asia; and Richard

Holbrooke, the newly appointed special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, the White House said.

MUNICH CONFERENCE

The Munich Conference, traditionally held at the Hotel Bayerischer in Munich, is an annual gathering of government officials, foreign and defense policy experts and journalists to discuss trans-Atlantic security issues.

In addition to NATO enlargement and the European security architecture, conference organizers said other issues will include nonproliferation and nuclear weapons security, and regional crises like those in Afghanistan, the Middle East, the Central Caucasus and the Balkans. Additionally, "more attention will be paid to new global challenges such as energy and climate policy or cyber-crime, often referred to as 'soft security' issues," conference organizers said.

For his contributions to global peace and international cooperation, former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger is being honored as the first recipient of the Ewald von Kleist Award of the Munich Conference, Conference Chairman Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger said. The Munich Conference, often referred to as the Wehrkunde Conference, was founded in 1962 by German publisher Ewald-Heinrich von Kleist-Schmenzin.

Kissinger is being honored for lifetime achievements. From 1969 until 1977, he served as the U.S. national security adviser and secretary of state, where he played a critical role in the formulation and execution of U.S. foreign policy under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. Kissinger is a Nobel Peace Prize winner.

According to Ischinger, a former German ambassador to Britain and to the United States, one of the core issues facing participants at the three-day Munich conference is the relationship between Western Europe and Russia in the aftermath of the conflict between Russia and Georgia in August 2008.

"A new understanding between the West and Russia regarding fundamental issues of European and global security, including future NATO accessions, is necessary and overdue," Ischinger said at a press briefing. "Instead we must find a way to work together to deal with current and future crises."

NATO undertook the role of providing stabilization and reconstruction in Afghanistan following a U.S.-led effort to rid the country of the authoritarian Taliban regime and the transnational terrorist group al-Qaida following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States. The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force has been working to stabilize and rebuild the country by training the Afghan army, police and judiciary; supporting the government in counter-narcotics efforts; developing a market infrastructure; and suppressing the Taliban.

The 2009 NATO Summit, which marks the 60th anniversary of the North Atlantic alliance, will be held in Strasbourg-Kehl, on the French-German border, on April 3 and April 4.

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*WPD506 02/06/2009

Transcript: State Department Daily Press Briefing
(Acting deputy spokesman Gordon Duguid briefs reporters February 6) (3433)

(begin transcript)

U.S. Department of State
Daily Press Briefing Index
Friday, February 6, 2009
11:05 a.m. EST

Briefer: Gordon Duguid, Acting Deputy Spokesman

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- The Secretary's Meeting with PM Berisha
- Discussion to Focus on Human Rights, Preparations for NATO Membership

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- Discussions with Kyrgyz Government Continue/Operations Proceeding as Normal
- Refer to DoD for SOFA Details/Protocol of Intention/180-day Notification Requirement
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- Government Release of A.Q. Khan Would Be Unfortunate/Serious Proliferation Risk
- Khan's Support to Iran, North Korea Will Have Harmful Impact for Years to Come

-- Pakistanis Aware of U.S. Position/Trying to Confirm Court Decision
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-- The Secretary's Call to PM Olmert Was Confidential

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2009
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

11:05 a.m. EST

MR. DUGUID: Good afternoon, colleagues.

QUESTION: The front row is not full.

MR. DUGUID: The front row seems to be extremely empty. They don't like the second string appearing.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MR. DUGUID: That's right. I have no announcements, so we'll go straight to your questions. Who would like to lead off, please?

Dave.

QUESTION: Gordon, could you give us an idea of what the agenda is for the Secretary and the Albanian leader? Are they going to talk about that purge of former communist people in their government?

MR. DUGUID: Well, they're going to talk about bilateral issues. Issues of human rights will come up. Whether it's the lustration law or not, I don't know if that will be raised in particular. I think the main thrust of the conversation will be about preparations for ascension into NATO membership. As you know, Albania is one of the two countries that's been granted NATO membership. The United States has agreed to that. We have signed our portion of the agreement. Other allies have as well. They'll be talking NATO issues for the most part, as well as other bilateral issues.

Yes.

QUESTION: Have you talked about Kyrgyzstan yet?

MR. DUGUID: I have not.

QUESTION: Would you?

MR. DUGUID: Would I talk about Kyrgyzstan? I don't have much in the way of news for you. There are government officials from Kyrgyzstan who have made statements in the press. We have seen those statements. However, we have not received our official notification about the status of the disposition of the Manas base. We proceed with our operations in Manas today and we will continue to do so as we try to continue our discussions with the Kyrgyz Government about our presence there.

QUESTION: Where are those discussions taking place? In Bishkek? Are they taking place here, or are they --

MR. DUGUID: In both places. We are communicating through our embassies, government-to-government.

QUESTION: Has the Secretary made any calls about this?

MR. DUGUID: The Secretary, to my knowledge, has not made any calls on this yet.

QUESTION: Well, yesterday she said she was -- she took a -- you know, a personal interest, she puts a high priority on this.

MR. DUGUID: That's true, and I'm sure that when the Secretary feels that her intervention is something that will be needed, that she would be happy to do that.

QUESTION: Well, I mean, are you still trying to -- do you still want to stay there? Do you still want to have -- I mean, is that -- the discussions are --

MR. DUGUID: That is one of our options. We are there, and it is always a --

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MR. DUGUID: -- you know, a bit of a procedure if you have to change. But we are there under the current agreement, and yes, we are in discussion to continue to stay there, but we do have other options.

QUESTION: Now, your Embassy in Tajikistan has put out a statement talking about cooperation with the Tajiks. Do you have anything on that?

MR. DUGUID: I don't have anything other than what the Embassy has said. We are in -- we have been cooperating with the Tajiks and we are looking at ways to cooperate with other nations throughout the region. As you know, Afghanistan is extremely important, not only for the United States, but for the countries that border Afghanistan. It needs to be a secure nation. It needs to be a stable nation. That is as important to the neighboring countries as it is to the United States.

QUESTION: Just to stick with this, Gordon, the -- our stories out of Bishkek quote the Kyrgyz -- Secretary of the Kyrgyz Security Council as telling reporters, quote, "The air base's fate has been decided," close quote. Quote, "I see no reason why the air base should remain in place now that this decision has been taken. We are not holding any talks on this," close quote.

So you are definitely certain that you are talking to them about this?

MR. DUGUID: I have – as you have read, I have seen press reports that may or may not reflect the final deliberations in the Kyrgyz Government. We have been in discussion with the government. They have not responded to us with a request to close down our operations there, and therefore we proceed as normal until we receive that.

QUESTION: And you are now in discussion – I'm just trying to get --

MR. DUGUID: Today – or whether or not we've been in discussions with them today or in the last two days on this, I don't know when the last communication was. We have seen a number of statements in the press that may or may not reflect the debate going on within the Kyrgyz Government. When they have a position, the way to present that to us is through the official channels, as we've been doing in the discussions for several months.

QUESTION: And one more on this. You probably don't know this off the top of your head, but if you don't, if you could check. I presume there's a SOFA governing the use of this base, and I wonder if you could find out for us what period of time may be specified for closure if they inform that you that it is going – formally, that is it is going to be closed.

MR. DUGUID: I have to defer to experts on this at the Pentagon. It's my understanding that the actual name of the agreement is called a Protocol of Intention, and that it is accurate to say that that Protocol of Intention includes a six-month notification, or 180 days. But I'm not the expert on this. The Pentagon has the experts on this. I refer you to them.

QUESTION: Just to try and nail this down a bit, you have sought from the Kyrgyz clarification of what their position is, and they have – what, not gotten back to you at all, or not told you that the decision is final?

MR. DUGUID: They have not told us that they've reached a final decision through official channels, which is what we are waiting for.

QUESTION: Have they told you anything through official channels?

MR. DUGUID: Not that I am aware of. We've seen the press reports.

QUESTION: So they have – so this is kind of a – you talk about discussions, but it appears that it's an awful one-sided discussion, where you ask and they don't respond.

MR. DUGUID: Well, we are waiting for them to formulate their position on the last discussions that we had. We've seen press reports of --

QUESTION: Well, I understand that --

MR. DUGUID: -- a debate that may be going on inside that government. But there is an official channel for them to present to the United States what their decision is.

QUESTION: But to the best of their – to the best of your knowledge, have they gotten back to you with anything?

MR. DUGUID: No, to the best of my knowledge, they have not gotten back to us with any changes.

QUESTION: So it's not exactly correct to say that you're in discussions with them, because they don't seem to be discussing anything.

MR. DUGUID: Well, it is correct to say that we have been talking to them and we're waiting for their response to us. I have seen that they've been having a vigorous debate in the media. That may represent a debate going on in the government. But a discussion does require you to stop and listen sometimes. We'll listen --

QUESTION: But there's also – but a discussion also requires two people to be involved in it, and it seems like it's --

MR. DUGUID: There are more than two people involved in it.

QUESTION: Well, I'm sure – two sides to it.

MR. DUGUID: And that is accurate --

QUESTION: It does not appear that the other side is actually discussing, so – discussing anything, so that what this guy that Arshad is talking about saying is there are no talks on this, that's correct.

MR. DUGUID: No. What is correct is that we have been in discussions with the Kyrgyz Government. We are waiting for them to respond to us about the disposition of the base – the future disposition of the base. What you are seeing and what we are seeing are many media reports that may or may not reflect what's going on internally as they formulate their position. We're waiting to hear back from them officially about what that position is.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. DUGUID: Yes, Viola.

QUESTION: Can I just ask one more on Albania and the meeting today?

MR. DUGUID: Yes.

QUESTION: Will there be any discussion about potential – Albania potentially accepting more detainees from Guantanamo?

MR. DUGUID: Well, the discussions on Guantanamo detainees are something that we're doing with individual nations and with the EU as a group. I don't have any

information for you on that particular topic in this meeting. If I can get something, I will do it.

QUESTION: That would be great, yes.

MR. DUGUID: Yes, please, Nina.

QUESTION: So can we go on to arms control? Yesterday, Robert said that these replacement talks for START or new kind of talks would be put on the fast track. Can you elaborate on that, when will Clinton meet with the Russians? Can you talk about that with us?

MR. DUGUID: Well, I don't have any announcement for you on when any meetings would be taking place, particularly at the level of Secretary. Fast track is an indication of reality. The START agreement ends this year, 2009. By definition, if we are going to have a post-START agreement, it has to be on the fast track in order to have something in place when START finishes.

We are prepared to do that. We are prepared to deal seriously with the Russians on arms reductions. And I don't know if we have made the first moves on that yet, whether or not we've had meetings on that yet. If we do have, I'll make sure that I get that to you. But the fast track is a statement of fact.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. DUGUID: Okay.

QUESTION: Can we stay on this for a moment? There've been some experts who have been saying that the U.S. is ready to cut their stockpile by 50 percent, reducing it to a thousand warheads. Is that --

MR. DUGUID: I think it's a bit early to start talking numbers yet until we start getting into the discussions themselves. Earlier reports were saying higher numbers. I think people are sort of looking at the situation, maybe guessing. The United States is prepared to talk seriously with the Russians about meaningful reductions in nuclear arsenals, and it's not good to start throwing numbers around just before we've started the discussions.

QUESTION: Do we have a replacement for Rood yet?

MR. DUGUID: Not that I'm aware of.

QUESTION: No?

MR. DUGUID: Not that I'm aware of.

QUESTION: Do you know when we can expect that?

MR. DUGUID: If we get nominations that are put forward, they will be announced, you know, at that time, but I don't have anything for you at the moment.

QUESTION: On the same subject?

MR. DUGUID: Same subject.

QUESTION: Same subject.

MR. DUGUID: Then one – Lach and then Viola.

QUESTION: Okay, yeah. The Secretary yesterday with the French foreign minister said that the United States and others would like to consult more with the Russians on Iran. Can you flesh that out a bit more for us? I mean, when and where and what topics would be discussed with the Russians? Would it just be on Iran or would it include some of the concerns Russia has with the U.S.?

MR. DUGUID: The discussions that we are ready to have with the Russians would be across the spectrum of our bilateral relationship as well as those multilateral issues on which we are cooperating. The United States is fully prepared to talk to Russia in a number of fora and bilaterally.

I don't have any announcements for you right now of when meetings will be taking place. The first meeting that could possibly take place of a planned nature is the G-20, where, of course, we will be looking at economic issues. There will be the NATO summit following that. I am not sure if there's going to be a NATO-Russia Council meeting at that summit, but that would be another place where we could have discussions.

The meetings take a little bit of doing. You can have a snap meeting, but it's better to prepare and to go in with a full agenda. When we have those things and are going to sit down with the Russians, we'll make sure that everybody knows.

QUESTION: I would assume that missile defense – because at least the previous administration saw the missile defense against, quote/unquote, rogue states like Iran would be part of these discussions that the U.S. would, under the new President --

MR. DUGUID: I could be wrong, but I have no doubt that when we sit down with the Russians, they will raise missile defense, and we'll be prepared to discuss it with them at that point. President Obama's position, Secretary Clinton's position on this is clear. Robert has stated it from the podium on several times. But I can't imagine that the Russians would not want to discuss this, and we are willing and able to discuss the full range of our relationship with Russia at the appropriate time.

Viola, same subject?

QUESTION: On the nuclear issue with Russia. The Daily Telegraph reported today that Henry Kissinger was sent by the Administration to Moscow to have negotiations to try to persuade the Russian Government to agree to 1,000 nuclear warheads. Can you tell us anything about that?

MR. DUGUID: I've seen that report. It's very well written. I don't have any confirmation of you on any of the points contained therein. I would refer you to the White House for any comment on what the Administration may be doing with Russia. As far as I know, I have no information on that report.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. DUGUID: The same question – same topic?

QUESTION: Different topic.

MR. DUGUID: Change of topic. Please.

QUESTION: A Pakistani court has declared the nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan to be free after five years of house arrest. I wonder – and as you'll recall, he was convicted after having confessed to selling nuclear technology to a number of countries, including Iran, North Korea, and Libya, and immediately pardoned but placed under house arrest.

One, what is your reaction to the court's decision to free the man who, I think, is regarded as the most successful nuclear proliferator in the world? And second, I believe the United States had repeatedly sought, but had been unsuccessful, in interviewing Mr. Khan about his activities. Does his newfound freedom open up the possibility of your talking to him about his proliferation activities?

MR. DUGUID: Well, I won't get ahead of where we are in what we know about the situation. We have seen that Mr. Khan's defense lawyer has announced a court decision, and that this announcement came late on a Friday in Islamabad which, of course, is the Sabbath. And there has been no government confirmation of this decision that I'm aware of, and I was in touch with our Embassy earlier.

But on the general principle of A.Q. Khan and his status, let me say that, in our view, it would be unfortunate if the court released him. We believe A.Q. Khan remains a serious proliferation risk. The proliferation support that Khan and his associates provided to Iran and North Korea has had a harmful impact on the international – on international security, and will for years to come.

QUESTION: Have you made – is there more?

MR. DUGUID: No.

QUESTION: Have you made that point to the Pakistanis?

MR. DUGUID: The Pakistanis are well aware of our position on this. This is not a new position.

QUESTION: Well, no --

MR. DUGUID: They are – they know that this is our position.

QUESTION: But have they been told subsequent to the lawyer's announcement?

MR. DUGUID: We're trying to confirm what the court has decided and said. But I have said, if it is accurate, this is the U.S. position and it will remain the U.S. position.

QUESTION: Were you anticipating A.Q. Khan's release, because sanctions were announced here and in the State Department a few weeks ago, and ones particularly targeting A.Q. Khan?

MR. DUGUID: The sanctions were announced to target the A.Q. Khan network, which we are actively pursuing and we are trying to roll up. And the United States and its international partners have done a good job in tracking down this network. That should have no effect or influence on whether or not Mr. Khan is let out of his current status of detention.

QUESTION: Still on that subject. You said that you're trying to confirm what his status is, what the court decision is.

MR. DUGUID: Correct.

QUESTION: Have you asked the government there for clarification --

MR. DUGUID: The gov --

QUESTION: -- or are you going through other channels?

MR. DUGUID: To be -- the government is -- it's Sabbath in Islamabad right now. The government is, if you will, not in session. So we have tried to reach those people that we know can inform us of the decision, haven't had a response as I came into this room. We may get it.

QUESTION: So right now, you're just trying to clarify the situation.

MR. DUGUID: Yeah.

QUESTION: But if he is released, you think it's a bad thing?

MR. DUGUID: If he is released, we think it would be extremely regrettable. This man remains a serious proliferation risk.

QUESTION: Let me congratulate you, Gordon. On your first appearance before the podium, you have answered the first hypothetical question that this building has ever, ever answered.

MR. DUGUID: I answered it hypothetically: I said "if." (Laughter.) So the subjunctive remains. (Laughter.)

Other questions?

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. DUGUID: Thank you.

QUESTION: I got one, I got one.

MR. DUGUID: Oops. Here we go.

QUESTION: Secretary Clinton called Israeli Prime Minister Olmert yesterday?

MR. DUGUID: That is correct.

QUESTION: Accounts of the conversation vary. Some Israeli media report that she called to thank him for the release of – I believe it's about \$43 million to go to pay PA salaries in the Gaza Strip. Other accounts are that she had called to press him to release that money, which presumably is something the United States Government would support since it's trying to bolster the Palestinian Authority, notably in Gaza.

So can you give us any detail on the substance of that call, whether it was just thanks for doing that or whether it was please do this?

MR. DUGUID: Accounts vary because the call was confidential and it will remain so with me.

Thank you.

(The briefing concluded at 11:24 a.m.)

(end transcript)

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*WPD507 02/06/2009

Transcript: This Week from Washington — February 6

(Podcast on Iran, climate change monitoring, Iraqi elections) (858)

(begin transcript)

This week, we discuss America's diplomatic relations with Iran under the Obama administration, learn more about tools to monitor climate change from outer space, and send a special congratulations to voters in Iraq.

Top diplomats are welcoming President Obama's recent comments on American relations with Iran. Obama said in a January 27 interview with the Saudi satellite channel al-Arabiya that he pledges to lay out a new diplomatic approach to Iran based on "direct dialogue" and "mutual respect."

In a joint statement following their February 4 meeting in Germany, representatives of the P5 + 1, a group consisting of U.N. Security Council permanent members China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, along with Germany, reinforced their commitment to a diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear challenge. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns represented the United States at the six-nation meeting, where he briefed members on the new administration's policy toward Iran.

Since Iran suspended the authority of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to conduct no-notice inspections of its nuclear sites in 2006, it has refused to address evidence of weapons-related elements of its uranium enrichment program. The P5+1 has pursued a "dual-track" approach of diplomatic incentives combined with political and economic sanctions.

America's diplomatic partners welcomed the readiness of the new administration to reach out to Iran. A German Foreign Ministry official urged Iranian officials to seize the diplomatic opportunity Washington is offering.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Tehran must comply fully with the United Nations over its nuclear program. She met with the top British and German diplomats on February 3rd. President Obama has signaled his intention to support tough and direct diplomacy with Iran, Clinton said, and if Tehran does not comply with United Nations Security Council and IAEA mandates, then there must be consequences. Clinton concluded that there is an increasingly common realization among the United States, Europe and states in the Middle East that a more effective and united approach toward Iran is needed and possible.

In April, Obama will travel to Strasbourg, France, for the 60th Anniversary NATO Summit. Iran is likely to be a top agenda item in several meetings with European heads of state. French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel issued a joint statement February 4 in support of new sanctions, if necessary, to halt Iran's disputed nuclear activities.

As concern about climate change increases, the need for more data to produce valuable information increases as well. One step toward this goal is the Orbiting Carbon Observatory, or OCO. This spacecraft will be launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California on February 23. It is the first U.S. spacecraft dedicated to studying carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the greenhouse gas that is warming the planet and changing the global climate.

The spacecraft will map the globe once every 16 days for at least two years. Scientists will use the resulting data to improve carbon-cycle models and reduce uncertainties in forecasts of how much carbon dioxide is in the atmosphere. The goal is to use the information to make more accurate predictions of global climate change.

NASA officials have said that, while we understand about how much carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere as a result of human activities, only about half the carbon dioxide that doesn't remain in the atmosphere can be accounted for. This is a real mystery for climate scientists. Natural processes like those in oceans and land

biomass like forests and plants are absorbing more than half of the carbon dioxide that human activities put into the atmosphere. The Orbiting Carbon Observatory will show not only how much of that carbon dioxide goes into the ocean versus how much goes into land biomass, it will also tell us where the gas is going.

President Obama says that Iraq's mostly peaceful provincial elections, held January 31st, are an important step forward for the nation and its people. Voting was mostly managed and organized by the Iraqi government and secured by its police and military forces. Some assistance was provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq. Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission performed professionally under difficult circumstances, Obama said.

As a next step, it is important that the councils get seated, select new governors, and begin work on behalf of the Iraqi people who elected them, Obama said. State Department officials said turnout was around 50 percent — similar to voter participation in other democracies — and many women cast ballots.

General David Petraeus, the commander of the U.S. Central Command overseeing U.S. forces in Iraq, confirmed there were very few incidents in an election that was held at more than 6,000 polling stations and included tens of thousands of candidates, some of them female. He praised the Iraqis for what he described as "an extraordinary accomplishment."

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(end transcript)

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*WPD508 02/06/2009

Text: United States and Guatemala to Implement the Merida Initiative
(Agreement will enhance efforts to combat organized crime) (224)

(begin text)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
February 5, 2009

MEDIA NOTE

The United States and Guatemala
Implement the Merida Initiative

U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala Stephen McFarland signed today a letter of agreement with the Government of Guatemala implementing the Merida Initiative, a multi-year regional effort to combat organized crime, gangs and the trafficking of narcotics and firearms. Minister of Government Salvador Gandara signed the letter on behalf of the Guatemalan government. Today's signing of the letter provides an initial \$3,650,500 in FY2008 funding for the first year of the Merida Initiative. It obligates an additional \$550,000 to the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala.

Under this agreement, the Guatemalan Ministry of Government will participate in the following five projects fully funded by the U.S. Government: Central American Fingerprint Exchange, \$400,000; Central American Vetted and Sensitive Investigative Units (SIU), \$500,000; Transnational Anti-Gang Initiative (TAG), \$1,225,000; Improved policing and police equipment, \$975,500; and improved prison management, \$550,000.

Representatives of the Government of the United States and the Government of Guatemala will meet quarterly to review qualitative and quantitative progress towards achievement of the project goals and objectives. These evaluations are in addition to the ongoing monitoring of the programs and activities conducted by each government.

(end text)

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*WPD509 02/06/2009

Text: Statement on Secretary Clinton's Travel to Asia
(Clinton to discuss common issues facing international community) (232)

(begin text)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
February 5, 2009

STATEMENT BY ROBERT A. WOOD, ACTING SPOKESMAN

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's Travel to Asia

In her first trip abroad since taking office, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton will travel to Asia, departing Washington, DC on February 15. Secretary Clinton will visit Japan (February 16-18), Indonesia (February 18-19), the Republic of Korea (February 19-20), and China (February 20-22).

In all capitals, Secretary Clinton will be discussing common approaches to the challenges facing the international community, including the financial markets turmoil, humanitarian issues, security and climate change.

In Tokyo, Secretary Clinton will meet with senior Japanese officials for discussions on the strategic bilateral alliance and cooperation with Japan on regional and global issues. The Secretary then will travel to Jakarta to hold consultations with senior Indonesian officials to discuss the close and growing partnership with Indonesia and perspectives on common interests in Southeast Asia.

In Seoul, Secretary Clinton will meet with senior leaders to discuss our expanding global cooperative partnership with our ally, the Republic of Korea.

The Secretary will conclude her trip in China where she will meet with senior officials in Beijing to further develop a positive, cooperative relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of China.

(end text)

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