

DoD News Briefing  
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Rear Admiral Craig R. Quigley, USN, DASD PA

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ADM. QUIGLEY: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I have a couple of announcements to lead things off, and then I'll be glad to take your questions.

First, an update on Secretary Cohen's trip to Asia. He is currently in Ho Chi Minh City and will meet there with business leaders and government officials. Yesterday, as I think many of you have seen or read in a variety of reporting, he visited the crash site of a U.S. Navy jet outside of Hanoi and again reaffirmed the importance to us of accounting for the return of remains of those missing in action from Southeast Asia. He also had very excellent meetings with his counterpart in the Vietnamese government, as well as other senior Vietnamese officials, about developing modest military- to-military relations, military medicine, and de-mining operations as well.

He will leave tomorrow for further bilateral and regional discussions with senior government officials in Tokyo and Seoul.

And just as an update on that, we are releasing a blue-topper later on today, as we often do when it occurs, of the definitive identification of two further sets of remains from Southeast Asia. And with the return of these two sets of remains to their loved ones here in the United States, the numbers -- as we speak today, there are 2,029 service members remain missing in action from the Vietnam War; 554 have been identified and returned to their families since the end of the war. And most of that work is done by the Army's Central Identification Lab out in Hawaii, and that is who did the work on the two sets that we are releasing information on those today. So that is something that continues and is very important to us.

Also, an update on Atlas Response, the humanitarian assistance to Southern Africa. We have a little over 700 U.S. military people in the region now. We anticipate that figure to stay there for a while. That may go up or down by a dozen or two on any given day, as units arrive and leave and air crews depart and leave, but that number of around 700 is a fairly static figure for a while.

Seven C-130 Hercules aircraft, two C-130 refueling aircraft and six helicopters are the forces that we have in the region, operating from the same three locations that I went over last week from the podium here. Since the 9th of March, we have flown 145 aircraft sorties, that's both fixed wing and rotary wing; moved 445 people and 183 tons of cargo, supplies and equipment. And financial aid is now up around a \$50 million mark, from the U.S. government, and just as another data point, we estimate that there are approximately 250,000 people in 96 different accommodation centers throughout the region that have been affected by the flooding and at those centers is where people can get food, clean drinking water, medical assistance, blankets, things of that sort. Those are the individuals that have been displaced from their homes by the flooding.

And finally, I'd like to welcome Ms. Alisha Schiffli, who is an intern working with our news desk staff this week. She is a senior in public relations at Southern Illinois University and will graduate in May. Welcome, Alisha. Good to have you with us.

With that, ladies and gentlemen, I'll take your questions.

Pam?

Q: Could you give us more details on the military-to military relations, what that will look like in actual functions?

ADM. QUIGLEY: No, I can't, at this point. What you have is a conceptual understanding and a desire on the part of both the United States and Vietnam to establish those mil-to-mils. So now comes -- at the Secretary Cohen and his counterpart level, you have an agreement in general that this is something that both nations think is worth pursuing. But now comes the specific discussions between the two nations and their militaries as to what that translates into in particulars, in the weeks and months ahead.

The three categories that I mentioned are at least a starting point. There could be more or maybe, as we proceed farther down those roads of discussion, we'll find out that that might not be as fruitful an area of mil-to-mil relationships. So it's kind of, at this point, a conceptual agreement and we move on to the details from here.

Q: I might have missed one of those areas. It was medicine, de-mining, and what was the third?

ADM. QUIGLEY: And just very modest mil-to-mil relations in general, and then specifically, perhaps, military medicine and de-mining operations.

Q: Have we ever had formal mil-to-mil relations, or is that only during World War II? I think the last time --

ADM. QUIGLEY: With Vietnam?

Q: With Vietnam, yeah.

ADM. QUIGLEY: Oh. History question. I'd have to go back and check the history books on that and find out if that was ever the case.

Q: Have you figured out any exact number of years it's been since a U.S. SECDEF has been over there? Is it 27, like they said during the briefing?

ADM. QUIGLEY: I believe the last, yes, was 27 years --

Q: Laird, is that?

ADM. QUIGLEY: Yes. Laird. Melvin Laird. And --

Q: Seventy-one.

ADM. QUIGLEY: No, it was. It was 1971, so it would have been 29 years, 29 years -- 1971. And Secretary Laird was the secretary at that point. Yeah.

Bill?

Q: Yes. Thank you, Admiral. What else is being done to heal the wounds of the Vietnam War, specifically, the war that the United States engaged in with North Vietnam, to bring about a reconciliation of the two peoples?

ADM. QUIGLEY: Well, I need to, I think, limit my remarks as to what on -- a mil-to-mil basis, and two areas come immediately to mind. First and foremost, I think there's tremendous importance that exists from a historical perspective and in actuality in Secretary Cohen's visit to

Vietnam. This was something that was very important for the next step, if you will, in developing a relationship with Vietnam's military.

So the military-to-military contacts that we have with a variety of nations around the world have proven over and over again, over time, to be a very constructive, positive way of bridging gaps and building relationships between militaries, whether it would be a communications exercise, a de-mining process, battlefield medicine, medical techniques. It comes in a variety of types, and each one is a bilateral arrangement that is mutually agreed to by both nations' militaries. But just the significance of his visit in opening that door, I think, is very important.

Second, we have got now a conceptual agreement to start off in discussions for military-to-military relationships.

And we'll see where that goes in the weeks and months ahead.

And third, I think, just very important to the many hundreds and thousands of the family members of American service members that had been lost during the Vietnam war, the willingness of the Vietnamese government to engage with us in cooperative explorations and recovery and then repatriation of remains is really important to many thousands of people in this country to get the remains of their loved ones back. That's being done in a very willing way by the government of Vietnam, and that's greatly appreciated.

Chris?

Q: On those two initial sets of remains you talked about, would those -- those were ones that were in Hawaii and they were finally identified. Those were not turned over in terms of --

ADM. QUIGLEY: No. No. This is a fairly lengthy process, this recovery and repatriation and all that. But eventually it's a fantastic piece of forensic work by the Army's lab in Hawaii. So this has been ongoing for a while. But we're finally to the point now where we're ready to make a public announcement with the concurrence of the families.

Toby?

Q: Where does the review of the Deutch computer files stand right now, and have you -- ?

ADM. QUIGLEY: I have not pulled that thread in a while. I will take that question. I don't know.

Q: But you have not completed that yet.

ADM. QUIGLEY: I just haven't asked the question for a while. I will take that question and see if I can find out.

Q: One of the things the Vietnamese government was interested in talking to Cohen about was possible compensation of victims of Agent Orange. Was that brought up, and does the Pentagon have a stand on it?

ADM. QUIGLEY: I have not seen that in descriptions of his discussions. But I don't think we have a complete --

Q: (Off mike) -- the Vietnamese embassy's web site.

ADM. QUIGLEY: Yeah. I don't think we have a complete understanding of the topics that were

-- I mean, as far as being complete, about the topics that were discussed between the two. I'll see what I can do.

Q: Is there a Pentagon policy on Agent Orange in Vietnam and compensation for victims, or -- ?

ADM. QUIGLEY: I don't know as if the subject has been discussed before this point. And I'm not sure that it was by Secretary Cohen this time. I'll see what I can do in that regard, and take a look at some of the transcripts coming out of there.

Q: Has the inspector general completed and delivered that survey he was doing on implementation of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy?

ADM. QUIGLEY: No, but I'm told that it's just days from being completed. So it's still a work in progress, but we're almost there.

Q: That's the one -- just clarify this for me. Well, that's the one where the DOD IG went around to about 30-some-odd bases?

ADM. QUIGLEY: Right. Exactly.

Q: It's not the Army's at Fort Campbell?

ADM. QUIGLEY: Right.

Q: Okay.

ADM. QUIGLEY: Right. The DOD IG is very nearly complete, whereas the Army IG's work is not due. Secretary Caldera asked it back on the 1st of May. Or -- yeah, I think that's right. I know it was early May.

Yeah.

Q: How soon after that is completed would it be made public, the DOD IG?

ADM. QUIGLEY: You'd want to allow Secretary Cohen an opportunity to review it. He could conceivably have additional questions and requests for clarification from the IG. That's always a possibility. When he is satisfied that the tasking has been completed to his satisfaction and he has a product in hand that's responsive to his tasking, we would notify the Hill, and then it would be publicly released.

I'd say you are not looking at a very lengthy process here; I would say a couple of weeks would be my guess, perhaps later on in the month of March.

Q: Admiral, the Federation of American Scientists will tomorrow release some satellite pictures of Pakistani missile technology on the ground and a nuclear reactor, and make the argument that the U.S. should start to engage with the Indian and Pakistani government to help them develop nuclear weapons in a way that is safe, transparent and doesn't threaten the planet with nuclear war.

What is the U.S. government's position on whether or not to cooperate with those two nuclear programs?

ADM. QUIGLEY: Our position, I think we have made fairly clear in months preceding this, is

that we regret the spread of nuclear weapons to any nation or additional nations on the earth.

Beyond that, I think it's constructive to facilitate engagement and dialogue between nations that do have nuclear weapons, do possess nuclear weapons, so that there is no surprises. If you hearken back to the Cold War years, despite deep and wide philosophical differences in the way that the Soviet Union and the United States saw the world, there was still engagement at a variety of levels, between the governments and the militaries of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Transparency and dialogue take away mystery and ease concern, if you have a greater understanding. So that is something that the United States would very much be in favor of, not only with those two nations, but with other nations of the world, as well.

Now, as far as the specific proposal that may or may not be made tomorrow, we'll just have to take that as it comes and see what happens.

Q: As it stands right now, is the U.S. doing any of these things? Because I thought I understood that there was a --

ADM. QUIGLEY: The Defense Department is not doing any of those things. Now, whether or not there is an attempt being made to engage in other elements of the federal government, I just don't know, David.

Q: We are looking for both countries to sign the CTBT?

ADM. QUIGLEY: Yes. As another issue, but certainly a major subset of that issue.

Q: Okay. I mean, I understood there to be a law that prevents the United States from helping countries with their nuclear weapons programs? Am I right about that?

ADM. QUIGLEY: You got me. I'm sorry. I don't know. There may very well be, but I just don't know of its existence. But I'll see if I can find that out for you.

Q: I think there was a --

Q: There was some talk at one point that obviously we don't like people developing nuclear weapons, but since they already had, that we would help them some -- in safeguard technology and fail-safe sorts of things so that they would -- sort of the control of nuclear weapons. No, that's not -- P.J. is wagging his head.

ADM. QUIGLEY: Chris, that doesn't ring a bell to me.

MR. CROWLEY: No, our desire is for both countries to walk away from their nuclear programs. Other countries have done it, such as Argentina and Brazil. No, we don't think that the existence of nuclear weapons in India, Pakistan, in any way enhances their security.

Q: So the argument is going to be that they should abandon these weapons?

ADM. QUIGLEY: It has been our position for some time.

Q: Isn't that a little unrealistic, though? I mean --

ADM. QUIGLEY: You have to do what you think is right, David, and temper that with as

realistic an approach as you can make it. But this is something the United States believes very deeply to be true.

Q: That it is --

ADM. QUIGLEY: That it is not helpful for -- it does not enhance either of those countries' security posture to have nuclear weapons. We are committed to doing whatever we can to stop additional nations from developing nuclear weapons, and we are very strongly in favor of signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. You know that. And so there's a variety of ways.

Now Chris, let me go back to something. I mean, if you see -- I'll make a distinction here between what David is talking about and the wide and deep assistance that the United States has given Russia and other former nations of the Soviet Union in dismantling and removing their former nuclear arsenal. So that's a different critter. Won't say we'll never engage, but the motivation there is completely different.

Thank you.

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