



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on July 22, 2009

Clinton Expresses Concerns About N. Korea-Myanmar Ties

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton arrived in Bangkok, Thailand, yesterday for a forum of the Association of Southeast Nations, or ASEAN, which begins today on the resort island of Phuket.

Clinton's first stop upon arrival was a meeting at Government House with Thailand's Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva. AFP news quoted State Department spokesman Ian Kelly, who said Clinton's talks with Abhisit would focus on "cooperation on climate change and counter-terrorism, regional security, and Thailand's leadership role as ASEAN chair."



However, U.S. officials have said that the prime focus at the ASEAN regional forum (ARF) will be how to increase the pressure on North Korea to return to multilateral nuclear disarmament talks after its recent missile and nuclear weapons tests. North Korea withdrew from the talks after the United Nations censured its long-range missile test on April 5. Following that missile launch and North Korea's May 25 nuclear test, the UN Security Council on June 12 unanimously approved stringent new sanctions against the communist regime.

Following her meeting with Abhisit, Clinton appeared at a press conference with Deputy Prime Minister Korbak Sabhavas, the transcript of which is posted at the State Department website. In answer to key questions posed by Glenn Kessler of the *Washington Post* — the first about abuses of young ethnic girls in Burma by the military — the second: "How concerned are you about the growing ties between North Korea and Burma, including signs of nuclear cooperation?" Clinton replied:

Let me begin by saying that we are deeply concerned by the reports of continuing human rights abuses within Burma, and particularly by actions that are attributed to the Burmese military concerning the mistreatment and abuse of young girls.

In reply to the second question, Clinton said:

We have worked directly and through our partners to press Burma to implement the [UN Security Council] Resolution 1874 concerning North Korea's actions.... Now, we know that there are also growing concerns about military cooperation between North Korea and Burma, which we take very seriously. It would be destabilizing for the region. It would pose a direct threat to Burma's neighbors. And it is something, as a treaty ally of Thailand, that we are taking very seriously.

Resolution 1874, adopted unanimously by the Security Council on June 12, condemned North Korea's May 25 nuclear test conducted in "violation and flagrant disregard" of relevant Council resolutions, particularly 1695 (2006) and 1718 (2006). It also demanded that the North Korea "not conduct any further nuclear test or any launch using ballistic missile technology."

In reaction to passage of the resolution, U.S. Alternative Representative for Special Political Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo said it provides "a strong and united international response" to North Korea's



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nuclear test, conducted in defiance of a UN-imposed ban following its first underground atomic test in October 2006. “The message of this resolution is clear: North Korea’s behavior is unacceptable to the international community and the international community is determined to respond,” said DiCarlo. “North Korea should return without conditions to a process of peaceful dialogue.”

There can be little dispute that North Korea is one of the most oppressive and militaristic regimes in the world today. And Burma (whose name was officially changed to Myanmar by the country’s military government in 1989) is a strong candidate for the runner-up spot as a heinous despotism. However, if history is to teach us anything, it is that whenever the United States has involved itself in international or regional organizations to deal with Asian bullies (as in Korea and Vietnam), the results have been disastrous.

North Korea is a prime example. Today, Hillary Clinton and the ASEAN members express worry about a potential North Korean missile threat and the relationship that nation is cultivating with another tyranny, Burma. Yet North Korea owes its very existence to the UN’s control of military operations during the Korean War. The Korean War was fought under the auspices of the United Nations. During the war, all military orders and directives sent from Washington and the Pentagon to the American commanders in Korea were first supplied to several offices at UN headquarters. This control prevented General Douglas MacArthur from securing victory against the communist North.

The next no-win war in Vietnam was almost a re-run of Korea. The legal basis for our involvement in Vietnam was the SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) collective defense treaty, which we signed on September 8, 1954. SEATO was a regional subsidiary of the United Nations. On January 10, 1967, President Lyndon Johnson plainly admitted: “We are in Vietnam because the United States and our allies are committed by the SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization] treaty to act to meet the common danger of oppression in Southeast Asia.”

The result of our involvement there is well recorded by historians. And, after the war, which formally ended with a communist victory in 1975, SEATO, having served its purpose, was disbanded in 1977.

As for ASEAN? It could in many respects be described as a successor organization of the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), though the life-spans of the two organizations overlapped, ASEAN having been formed on August 8, 1967. It originally consisted of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, but its membership has been expanded to include Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

Though the United States is not a member of ASEAN, the group is certainly included in Hillary Clinton’s reference to “our partners” that will “press Burma to implement the [UN Security Council] Resolution 1874.”

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were both justified by our government by the necessity to implement UN resolutions. Such entanglement is a sure way for our government to become emmeshed in a never-ended secession of no-win wars controlled by the UN and its subsidiary agencies. Wars to advance the mission of the UN — not the United States.

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