

**Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen**  
**Remarks for Hearing: "U.S. Policy Toward Burma"**  
**Wednesday, October 21, 2009, 10:00 AM**

Welcome to Assistant Secretary Campbell and to our distinguished panel of private experts.

As Winston Churchill warned:

"There is no greater mistake than to suppose that platitudes, smooth words, and timid policies offer a path to safety."

I couldn't agree more and, in that vein, wish to underscore that I oppose dialogue with the Burmese military junta and oppose the offer of further carrots in the form of expanded economic assistance.

Not surprisingly, engagement has been tried it and has failed.

The Bush Administration engaged with the Burmese junta twice.

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary Eric John, now our Ambassador to Thailand, flew to Beijing in June of 2007 - a mere two years ago - to engage with representatives of the Burmese regime.

And what was the junta's response to Mr. John's request for a more open and humane political system?

Following street protests a few months later in which Buddhist monks joined students, political activists, and ordinary citizens, the regime responded with batons and bullets.

The junta's harsh repression of the Saffron Revolution - named for the color of the monks' robes - was witnessed by horrified viewers on television screens all around the world.

Midnight raids on monasteries followed, where eyewitnesses reported that troops were "beating and killing monks."

The Bush Administration's second attempt at engagement followed the cyclone which hit Burma in May of 2008, leaving an estimated 146,000 dead and so many more homeless.

Then U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Henrietta Fore and Admiral Timothy Keating of the U.S. Pacific Command flew into Burma in the storm's aftermath with initial relief supplies.

They met with the regime's top naval officer who indicated that the delivery of further American relief assistance would be permitted.

Subsequently, however, four U.S. navy ships, carrying relief supplies, had to abort their mission after waiting in vain for over three weeks for permission to assist storm victims.

U.S. humanitarian efforts were described by the regime-controlled media as the U.S. military “preparing an invasion.”

Congress took a different approach to the continued atrocities and belligerence of the Burmese regime.

Our distinguished former Chairman and my dear friend Tom Lantos, and I introduced and fought for adoption of the Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE Act.

The JADE Act includes new restrictions on the importation of gem stones and other new sanctions against the regime, its family members and their cronies.

It was signed into law in July of last year - only 15 months ago.

U.S. policy therefore should focus on the full and robust implementation of the measures contained in this law, rather than focusing on engagement and inducements of the Burmese regime.

The actions and policies of this regime are of increasing, rather than decreasing, concern.

This summer, we learned through Australian reporting of interviews with Burmese defectors, that the military junta appears far more engaged in nuclear proliferation activities with North Korea than ever previously suspected.

U.S. navy vessels spent part of this summer in the South China Sea tracking the movement of a North Korean merchant vessel, suspected of carrying missile parts destined for Burma, before it was forced to turn back due to the international uproar.

A Burmese kangaroo court just extended the house arrest of democracy advocate and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi for another 18 months on trumped up charges so that she is effectively blocked from playing any role in the upcoming elections.

Isn't there a grave danger that the regime will launch an offensive prior to the scheduled elections, to "pacify" border areas through bloody assaults, including the burning and pillaging of villages, gang rape, mass murder, mutilation, forced labor and child soldiering?

Haven't ethnic cease fire groups which reject the regime's demand that they join a junta-controlled Border Guard Force (BGF) been warned of the dire consequences for themselves and their people?

Hasn't the Burmese junta responded to the latest American overtures by imprisoning and torturing a U.S. citizen?

In light of this, how could anyone credibly argue that engaging the Burmese regime with new carrots, however fresh, particularly as its behavior is getting markedly worse, advance U.S. security interests and foreign policy priorities?

The U.S. must heed Churchill's warning about "supposing that smooth words and timid policies offer a path to safety."

I look forward to our witnesses' testimony.