

## DOCUMENTATION

### *Pacific Basin Assumes Major Importance to the United States: Highlights of Wolfowitz' Year-End Interview*

WASHINGTON — “Whether from the security, economic or political standpoint, the nations of the Pacific Basin are rapidly assuming a position of major importance to the United States, not only regionally but also in a global sense,” according to Paul Wolfowitz, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs.

Wolfowitz made the observation in a year-end interview with USIA staff writer Jeanne Holden, held between two of this winter's Asian-American highpoints — President Reagan's November trip to Asia, and Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang's upcoming visit to Washington.

The President's November trip, Wolfowitz pointed out, had helped to bring the growing importance of U.S. relations with Asia to the attention of both Americans and Asians.

“The President's April trip to China, which will be his second to Asia in only six months, will serve to further consolidate our Asia-Pacific relationships,” he added.

Other highlights of his year-end interview included:

#### Soviet Threat:

— The President's trip “demonstrated our concern with Soviet intentions and activities in the Pacific, as witnessed by the KAL downing, the growth in the Soviet Pacific Fleet . . . and the targeting of over one-third of Soviet SS-20's on Asia.”

— Apart from the tragedy of the KAL incident, according to Wolfowitz, “the Soviet attitude in its aftermath . . . has reinforced for many in Asia . . . the nature and reality of the Soviet threat.”

#### Relations with the People's Republic of China:

— The Reagan Administration believes the East Asian region has “much to gain from a co-operative U.S.-China relationship which promotes peace and stability in East Asia and opposes Soviet and Soviet-proxy expansionism in the region.

#### Relations with ASEAN:

— Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir's upcoming visit (17-20 January) “like the earlier visits of the other ASEAN heads of government, symbolizes the importance the U.S. places on these countries both individually and as members of ASEAN”.

— The Reagan Administration “particularly appreciate[s] ASEAN's widely supported efforts to restore the independence and neutrality of Kampuchea . . .”

— “The establishment of a neutral, non-aligned Kampuchea . . . is essential to the long-term stability and security of Southeast Asia.”

Relations with Japan:

— The Reagan Administration believes that “in view of the large and continuing Soviet military build-up in the Far East . . . it is necessary for Japan to boost further its capability to defend itself.”

Relations with the Philippines:

— “Despite the political and economic uncertainties that have characterized some recent developments in the Philippines, our bilateral relationship with that country remains firm and cordial.”

— The Administration views “free and fair national assembly elections . . . and a thorough and impartial investigation of the circumstances of the Aquino assassination to be among the most crucial factors . . . to normalize the situation in the Philippines.”

The Anzus Alliance:

— The 1983 Anzus Council review of the Anzus Mutual Security Treaty “reaffirmed the view held by successive Australian, New Zealand, and U.S. Governments . . . that the Anzus alliance is vital to the common defence and broader interests of our three nations and peoples.”

Q: How has the President’s trip to Japan and Korea helped to strengthen U.S.-Asian relations?

A: One of the major purposes of the President’s trip was to bring to the attention of Americans as well as Asians the growing importance of our relationships in Asia. Whether from the security, economic or political standpoint, the nations of the Pacific Basin are rapidly assuming a position of major importance to the U.S., not only regionally but also in a global sense. To cite only two examples: we trade more now with Asia than we do with any other region of the world, and Japan has become our largest overseas trading partner.

The President’s trip also demonstrated our concern with Soviet intentions and activities in the Pacific, as witnessed by the KAL downing, the growth of the Soviet Pacific Fleet (which is now its largest), and the targeting of over one-third of Soviet SS-20’s on Asia.

I think that the President’s trip was very successful in focusing Americans’ attention on Asia and on the important interests we have there. At the same time it has helped to communicate to Asians our own recognition of their increasing strength and maturity. The President’s trip has also enabled us to address some outstanding bilateral issues we have with Japan and Korea. I expect that the President’s April trip to China, which will be his second to Asia in only six months, will serve to further consolidate our Asia-Pacific relationships.

Q: What might be the economic or security benefits for the East Asian region of improved U.S.-China relations?

A: Since the early 1970s, successive American administrations have sought to develop a strong and enduring relationship with China, for its strategic and regional security value as well as for the benefits derived from bilateral commercial, cultural, and scientific exchanges.

1983 was a year of particularly active and important interchange. Secretary Shultz and Foreign Minister Wu exchanged visits, during which our dialogue was advanced. Secretary Baldrige and Secretary Weinberger each made significant trips to Beijing,

announcing and explaining the President's decision to liberalize technology transfer policies for China. Agreements were reached concerning trade in textiles, grain, and other areas of mutually beneficial economic concern.

As to the benefits to be derived by the East Asian region, we have always made clear to all our friends and allies in the area that improvements in U.S.-China relations would not come at their expense. We have consulted closely with our regional friends and allies as our relationship with China has developed. Our approach to the Chinese has been heavily influenced by our belief that the other states in the region have much to gain from a co-operative U.S.-China relationship which promotes peace and stability in East Asia and oppose Soviet and Soviet-proxy expansionsim in the region.

We believe that a politically stable and economically developing China best serves the interests of all the states of the region. Our policies are designed to assist in that process.

Q: Do you think the KAL incident has changed the way our friends and allies in East Asia and the Pacific view the Soviet Threat?

A: We have been concerned for some time about the willingness of the Soviet Union to live within the bounds of acceptable international behavior. We have also had a very specific concern with the steady build-up of Soviet power in the Pacific which has been under way for over a decade now. Apart from the tragedy of the incident itself, I think that the Soviet attitude in its aftermath, and its unwillingness to admit fault, provide compensation or otherwise co-operate with the international community, has reinforced for many in Asia things that they already knew, from Soviet actions in places like Afghanistan and Indochina, about the nature and reality of the Soviet threat. After all, the KAL aircraft was downed only a short distance from both Japan and Korea, and many citizens of those nations and other Asian nations were killed.

Q: What is the Administration's view of the ASEAN nations' effort to resolve the Kampuchean problem?

A: The Administration strongly supports the efforts of the ASEAN nations to achieve a comprehensive political settlement in Kampuchea. ASEAN's approach to the problem makes it clear to Vietnam that its occupation of Kampuchea cannot be sanctioned and that it is in Vietnam's interest to negotiate a settlement. U.N. General Assembly voting on Kampuchea has consistently underscored Vietnam's isolation of Kampuchea and the broad international support for ASEAN's efforts to achieve a political settlement.

We share with ASEAN the goal of a complete Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea and the restoration of Khmer self-determination. The establishment of a neutral, non-aligned Kampuchea, which is not a threat to any of its neighbours, including Vietnam, is essential to the long-term stability and security of Southeast Asia.

Q: We've talked about President Reagan's visits to Japan, South Korea and China and about ASEAN interests *vis-à-vis* Indochina. What do you foresee in U.S. relationships with individual Southeast Asian nations in 1984?

A: First of all, I want to say that the President greatly regretted having had to postpone his visit to Southeast Asia which was to have included a meeting in Jakarta with the foreign ministers of the ASEAN countries. Rescheduling a Southeast Asia visit is still a high priority in the President's future travel plans but we are not in a position to predict when a visit might be arranged.

We very much look forward to the Washington visit of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir on 17-20 January. Dr Mahathir's visit, like the earlier visits of the other ASEAN heads of government, symbolizes the importance the U.S. places on these countries both individually and as members of ASEAN. We share great and growing economic and political interests with each of them. We particularly appreciate ASEAN's widely supported efforts to restore the independence and neutrality of Kampuchea, which would contribute greatly toward ensuring peace and stability on the Southeast Asian mainland.

We very much look forward to pursuing our high-level dialogue with ASEAN. In addition to the recently-concluded economic dialogue meeting in Manila, which was highly useful from our standpoint, Secretary Shultz is anticipating another very productive round of consultations when the ASEAN foreign ministers meet again in mid-1984 in Indonesia.

Q: At the Shimoda Conference and during the President's trip to Japan, the Reagan Administration emphasized the need for Japan to increase its self-defence expenditures. Would you comment on the reasons for this?

A: Under the Reagan Administration, the United States has tended not to focus on defence spending as such, but rather on defence roles and missions. Japan has set for itself the missions of defence of Japan's homeland, its territorial sea and air space, and its sea-lanes out to 1,000 nautical miles. The United States believes that these are appropriate missions for Japan to undertake.

Naturally, it is up to the government and people of Japan to determine the amount of money that they will spend for defence. Our hope is that Japan will develop the capabilities to fulfil these missions as soon as possible.

There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, we believe that Japan is economically capable of bearing a larger share of our common defence burden. Secondly, in view of the large and continuing Soviet military build-up in the Far East during the past few years, it is necessary for Japan to boost further its capability to defend itself. Finally, and this is related to the last point, an enhanced Japanese self-defence capability is of interest to both our nations because U.S. forces traditionally available for defence roles in the Western Pacific have been needed in recent years to respond to security contingencies in other vitally important regions. Foremost among these is the Persian Gulf area and the defence of the oil routes there, a mission that directly benefits Japan, which imports 80 per cent of its oil from the Gulf region.

Q: In the spring of 1983, the U.S.-Philippine military bases review was hailed as a success, increasing the security of the U.S. and its Pacific allies now and in the future. In late summer, however, Philippine opposition leader Benigno Aquino was assassinated and, since that time, Manila has been the site of much economic and political unrest (capital flight, demonstrations). What was the impact of these events on U.S. relations with the Philippines and/or the military bases arrangement, and on the overall security or stability of the region?

A: Despite the political and economic uncertainties that have characterized some recent developments in the Philippines, our bilateral relationship with that country remains firm and cordial. There have been some public expressions of anti-American sentiment, but this position is not shared by the overwhelming majority of the Filipino population. Meanwhile, the implementation of the memorandum of agreement signed

during the review last spring of the U.S.-Philippine military bases agreement is proceeding smoothly on both sides.

As for the effect of recent developments in the Philippines on the stability of the country, there are admittedly serious problems still to be worked out. One of the most urgent of these relate to the Philippine's difficulties in servicing its external debt, which has necessitated stringent restructuring and austerity measures at home and the co-operation of the Philippines' foreign creditors in working out co-ordinated relief measures abroad. On the political side, we continue to view the holding of free and fair National Assembly elections next May and a thorough and impartial investigation of the circumstances of the Aquino assassination to be among the most crucial factors that could serve to normalize the situation in the Philippines.

Q: This past summer, during the annual Anzus Council meeting, representatives of Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. held the first review of the Anzus Treaty. What was the importance of this review in terms of mutual security interests?

A: The 1983 Anzus Council meeting afforded an opportunity for a most thorough review of the Anzus Mutual Security Treaty. It will be recalled that the Treaty was negotiated in the aftermath of World War II when the world faced a set of political and economic circumstances quite different from those of today. We are pleased to conclude in the course of the review that the Treaty is as valid today as it was when it was negotiated. Although the world situation and threats to our security have changed in many ways, the Anzus alliance has the resilience to make it as relevant to our individual and collective security interests today as it has been in the past.

The review reaffirmed the view held by successive Australian, New Zealand and U.S. governments for over thirty years that the Anzus alliance is vital to the common defence and broader interests of our three nations and peoples. We have a long history of friendship and close co-operation based on the important values that we hold in common and we are pleased that our friendship and co-operation remain strong.

SOURCE: United States Information Service, Embassy of the United States of America, Singapore.