

happenings when I visited Ketchikan. There was no better guide than Sherrie when members of the Delegation were in town.

To me, Sherrie is a friend, close advisor, and one of the best staffers I have had the pleasure of working with. I know Sherrie is looking forward to a lively retirement, particularly as a grandmother. I'm sure that she will continue to work hard, just as she has during her time serving the Delegation. Today, we remember Sherrie's accomplishments and know that she will achieve many more in the years to come.

BURMA SANCTIONS SHOULD NOT
BE EASED, LIFTED, OR REMOVED

HON. TRENT FRANKS

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 18, 2012

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, on March 30, 2012, the Associated Press had an article about the Obama Administration expanding sanctions against the Syrian regime. These new sanctions focused on military and security officials, particularly targeting the Minister of Defense. In a statement, Under Secretary of the Treasury David Cohen said, "The U.S. and the international community will hold to account those who stand with the Assad regime as it trains the instruments of war against Syrian civilians . . . the time has long since passed for Syrian officials at all levels to turn their backs on this bloody regime." The article went on to state that over 9,000 people had been killed in the fighting in Syria.

Jump ahead to today, and reports in the Washington Post that the U.S. is now "coordinating" "more and better weapons" for the Syrian opposition. Persian Gulf states are funding the weapons.

Also today we hear deeply disturbing news that the Administration is "easing" sanctions against the dictatorship in Burma. This has to raise the question of why Administration officials are actively working—in fact "coordinating"—the delivery of "significantly more and better weapons" for the Syrian opposition, but is literally turning its back on and deliberately ignoring the extreme brutality being carried out on a daily basis by the Burmese dictatorship against the people of Burma, particularly the Kachin people.

Why would the Administration lift sanctions against a brutal dictatorship that has years and years of documented, horrific human rights violations against the people of its nation, when in the Middle East, the Administration is supporting the opposition forces fighting against a different brutal dictatorship? Why is it that one brutal dictatorship has the ire and opposition of the U.S. Government, but another dictatorship, that has yet to prove it will uphold and implement its commitments, is being rewarded for continuing to attack, rape, and kill its people?

What is going on that our nation, which says it stands for the protection of human rights and the upholding and protection of basic human freedoms, would decide to help one group fighting a brutal dictatorship while deliberately ignoring, and now, even supporting a terrible dictatorship on the other side of the world? The Administration needs to strongly reconsider its actions in Burma.

This easing of sanctions against a brutal Burmese regime comes in the face of much opposition from the people of Burma, ethnic leaders, democracy activists, NGOs, ASEAN parliamentarians, and Nobel Peace Prize winner Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and is disturbing and puzzling to say the least.

What does this Administration expect to gain for itself by easing sanctions against Burma? It certainly can't be anything that will help the people of Burma, since the ethnic leaders and the democracy groups have urged the U.S. not to lift, ease, or remove sanctions.

United to End Genocide says, "Economic investment is one of the driving forces behind the Burmese army's attacks against civilians in Kachin State. By expediting the rollback of sanctions, President Obama has told Burma's long suffering ethnic nationalities that they aren't part of the equation."

Democracy leader Aung Din with U.S. Campaign for Burma says, "The United States will be responsible for generously rewarding the regime if the war in Kachin State and human rights abuses in ethnic areas do not end, hundreds of remaining political prisoners are not released, and political settlements between the regime and ethnic resistance groups are not realized."

The Vice President of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC), "urged the U.S. Government to maintain sanctions on business activities in Myanmar, warning that a gold rush in the Southeast Asian nation could fuel further human rights abuses, risk fragile ceasefires and arrest ongoing democratic reforms rather than bolster them." As everyone with any knowledge on Myanmar will attest, the changes we have seen to date are far from irreversible. It is ludicrous to reward the current government's untested reforms by paving the way for a gold rush. Fighting in Myanmar's ethnic areas continues and many of the ethnic leaders are concerned that these reforms are just a ploy to pave the way for "development" projects on their lands."

The Central Executive Committee of the United Nationalities Federal Council, which consists of representatives of all the ethnic minority groups—all of whose people have endured horrific attacks at the hands of the Burmese regime—says, "It is necessary for the international community to oppose and pressure Bamah [Burma] Tatmadaw for its wrong actions. Accordingly, we would like to request the international community not suspend or lift the remaining political, military, financial and economic sanctions."

And Nobel Peace Prize winner Daw Aung San Suu Kyi urged great caution in lifting or easing sanctions urging that the American people be allowed to decide whether or not sanctions against Burma should change.

Instead of listening to the people of Burma as well as those outsiders and foreigners working on behalf of the people of Burma, the U.S. Administration has ignored them all. Instead, it has gone the path of cozying up to dictators and believing their promises . . . an odd decision since the dictators have not tended to keep their word in the past. The pattern generally has been that as soon as the dictators have received what they wanted from the West or the international community, they have simply gone back to their old ways while the rest of the world stands by and wrings its hands in consternation. Nothing has been done to hold those dictators to account for their actions.

Now, with the easing of sanctions, the U.S. has given the regime what it wants and has lost any leverage it might have. It is appalling that a country founded on freedom and democracy has taken steps to deliberately undermine democracy and freedom in Burma and instead has chosen to support a dictatorship bent on absolute control of its people.

I wonder if this Administration has read the stacks and stacks of reports detailing the rape, death and destruction of the ethnic minorities and their villages. Has it read its own State Department's report on the dictators' policy of rape of ethnic women? Has it read its own Country Reports over the years that have documented the torture of political prisoners? Has this Administration read reports that have come out in the past month about the 70,000 displaced persons in Kachin State? The latest attacks have all taken place while the regime has allegedly been making "progress" towards democracy and openness.

Would this Administration open up to the Assad regime and remove sanctions while its military was involved in deliberately killing the Syrian people? Clearly not.

The Administration has even sent U.S. military advisors and experts to help the Ugandan Government track and capture the brutal warlord Joseph Kony and his cronies. Yet, despite well known and thoroughly documented violence, brutality, and destruction under the orders of the regime in Burma, the U.S. Government has now decided that the people of Burma no longer matter.

I am ashamed of these actions by the U.S. Government. The sanctions should not be eased, and the Administration must re-impose these sanctions and listen to the people of Burma instead of the siren call of the dictators' money, brutal power, and false promises.

To the people of Burma, I say, please know that you are not forgotten and there are many in the West who stand with you and will work to ensure that your freedoms and rights are upheld and protected. Your voice should not be ignored and you should be able to live in peace in your own country. Shame on those, particularly Western officials, who would tell you by their actions that you have no rights and your life is worthless.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013

SPEECH OF

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 17, 2012

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4310) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2013 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2013, and for other purposes:

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Chair, today, I voted in favor of Representatives BARBARA LEE's and BARNEY FRANK's Amendment that would limit Defense spending in the coming fiscal year to the amount authorized in the Budget Control Act of 2011.

I am opposed to House Republican efforts to rewrite last summer's budget agreement, unfairly shifting the burden for deficit reduction