

White House removes Cuba from list of terrorist nations

by Kelsey Fleming
News Editor

In an effort to build diplomatic relations and thaw Cold War tensions, President Obama announced that the White House will remove Cuba from the US government's list of nations that sponsor terrorism. Currently, the countries on this list include Sudan, Syria, and Iran. President Obama expressed that over the past six months, Cuba "has not provided any support for international terrorism" and that they have "provided assurances that [Cuba] will not support acts of international terrorism in the future."

The US State Department listed Cuba on the terrorism list in 1982 because of claims that Cuba was promoting "armed revolution by organizations that used terrorism." Based on the 2013 Report on Terrorism, there was evidence that Cuba provided the Basque separatist group ETA and Colombia's Farc guerrilla group with support. In response, Cuba declared that the accusations were false.

Many politicians believe taking Cuba off this list is an auspicious step in paving a brighter future. White House press secretary Josh Ear-

nest commented, "We will continue to have differences with the Cuban government, but our concerns over a wide range of Cuba's policies and actions fall outside the criteria that is relevant to whether to rescind Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism."

However, there are large numbers of politicians who are adamantly against the White House's decision. For example, Republican Senator Marco Rubio stated, "[Cuba] harbours fugitives of American justice, including someone who killed a police officer in New Jersey over 30 years ago. It's also the country that's helping North Korea evade weapons sanctions by the United Nations." Republican Ileana Ros-Lehtinen also condemned the action saying, it "will only undermine US national security and send a signal to the Cuban people that instead of disapproving of the Castro regime's methods, the US is rushing to embrace two decrepit tyrants in their twilight."

Over the coming months, the US aims to ameliorate diplomatic and economic relationships with Cuba. Only time will tell how and if relations improve.

(Sources: CNN, BBC News, New York Times)



NORMALIZING RELATIONS: President Obama stated his intent to improve diplomatic ties.

Rover finds liquid water

by Mhairi Finlayson
Web Editor

On April 13, an article was released in Nature Geoscience, providing evidence of liquid water on Mars. Though Mars is thought to have had large amounts of water in the past, once it lost its magnetic field, it is believed that its water was lost to space. However, the Curiosity Rover has discovered evidence of water vapor absorbed within the salt in Mars's soil. Salt lowers the freezing point of the water, allowing it to remain a liquid at colder temperatures.



THEY SEE ME ROVIN': The Curiosity Rover found traces of water vapor absorbed in salt while taking samples of Marsian soil.

Researchers have used temperature, air pressure, and humidity measurements on the planet to determine that on some nights on Mars, the conditions are right for the salty water to form. The ideas published in Nature Geoscience have been discussed before; however, this is the first time real evidence has emerged that this is occurring. In addition, scientists believed this would be much more likely to occur closer to the planet's poles, so Curiosity's discovery of this evidence at its location near the planet's equator suggests that even more water may be found closer to Mars' poles.

This liquid water can be found at night in the top five centimeters of Mars's soil. The air cools at night, and colder air cannot hold as much moisture. The water is then forced into the soil, where the perchlorate salts in the soil prevent it from freezing, leaving it in a liquid state. The water then evaporates at sunrise.

Water molecules were first found on Mars long ago, and have since been found in various states, including frozen at the poles, bonded to minerals in the soil, and vaporized in the atmosphere. However, this is the first occurrence of liquid water found on Mars. It is hypothesized that dark streaks viewed on Mars' surface are due to the flow of water. With this discovery, that becomes a definite possibility. If it is true, it also indicates the presence of much larger volumes of water on Mars than was previously estimated.

Unfortunately, the presence of liquid water on Mars is not indicative of life. The temperatures are still too low for life to form, "lower than the threshold needed for the cellular metabolism of life as we know it," said Javier Martin Torres, author of the Nature Geoscience study and a planetary scientist at Spain's Andalusian Earth Sciences Institute and Sweden's Luleå Technical University. (Sources: The Independent, Vox, NASA, Nature Geoscience)

Australia sends koalas to Singapore to mark anniversary

by Hyuntae Byun
World Editor

Recently, four koalas were treated to first-class treatment before flying from Brisbane to Singapore to take up residence at the Singapore Zoo.



all photos courtesy wikimedia commons

FUZZY AMBASSADORS: The koalas being sent to Singapore symbolize a century of diplomacy.

The koalas were pampered with many luxuries, such as a warm towel, can of Schweppes seltzer, and fresh eucalyptus leaves. Australian-based Qantas Airlines sponsored the koala pampering as a photo op before taking off. Due to flight regulations, during the actual flight the koalas were corralled into custom-built containers.

The four koalas, named Paddle, Pellita, Chan, and Idalia, are a gift to the Singapore Zoo from the Lone Pine Sanctuary in Brisbane in order to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Singaporean independence as well as the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Singapore and Australia. The fuzzy marsupials will be on display at the zoo for at least the next six months, and will become permanent residents when the Singapore Zoo establishes and is capable of maintaining a permanent koala population.

Currently, the koalas are in a quarantine zone of the zoo, where they will remain until the zoo completes construction of a special koala exhibit. The enclosure was planned in conjunction with the Brisbane Lone Pine Sanctuary, which is a leading center of koala expertise. To support the specific dietary needs of the koalas, Qantas Airlines agreed to transport two shipments of fresh eucalyptus leaves from Brisbane every week.

The koalas are a part of a larger series of activities organized by the Australian government named "50 Bridges," in celebration of 50 years of cooperation between the Australian and Singaporean governments. When Singapore became independent from Malaysia in 1965, Australia was the first country to set up official diplomatic ties with Singapore. The two countries have continued to maintain close ties since then, including the signing of a free trade agreement in 2003.

Australia has made a habit of using koalas to symbolize significant anniversaries. For example, the Saitama Children's Zoo in Japan features an exhibit with three koalas from Queensland's Newman government that were given as gifts in 2013 as part of festivities marking the 30th anniversary of the Newman-Saitama sister-state relationship.

In Nov. 2014, koalas played another role in international relations when the Dreamworld Wildlife Foundation's two year old koala Jinbelung met famous world leaders at the G20 Brisbane summit. Jinbelung was photographed alongside prominent global leaders including US President Barack Obama, Russian President Vladimir Putin, South Korean President Park Geun Hye, and Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

(Sources: BBC, NY Post, CNN, the Straits Times)

Armenia remembers tragedy

by Kelsey Fleming
News Editor

It has been a century since the Ottomans began what was to be the killing of over 1.5 million Armenians. On April 24, 1915, a group of Armenian public figures was killed, marking the start of the massacre. Now, 100 years later, ceremonies are being held all across Armenia to commemorate the dead.

The Armenians settled in Eurasia about 3,000 years ago and created the independent kingdom of Armenia. During the 15th century, Armenia was absorbed into the powerful Ottoman Empire. Conflicts arose between the Turks and Armenians over religion because the Ottomans were Muslim and the Armenians had established Christianity as their religion during the time that Armenia was independent. Under Ottoman rule, the Armenians had fewer rights than the Turks and had to pay higher taxes than the Muslims. Despite their oppression, the Armenians were generally better educated and more wealthy. Resentment built up as the Ottomans began worrying that the Armenians might be more loyal to the neighboring Christian government of Russia.

At the end of the 19th century, the Armenians began fighting for basic civil rights. The ruler at the time, Abdul Hamid II, greatly valued loyalty and became enraged with the Armenians. He decided to have a state-sanctioned pogrom where hundreds of thousands were killed between 1894 and 1896. These numbers barely compared to the upcoming massacre, however. In 1914, the Turks entered World War I on the German side. During this year, Armenians helped Russia fight the Turks in hopes that they would be free from the Ottomans. Less than a year after the Turks joined the war, the genocide began. The Ottomans either killed the Armenians immediately, or forced them to go on death marches without food or water through the Mesopotamian desert. Others were killed by squads who threw them off cliffs, drowned them, crucified them, or burned them. By 1922, at the end of the genocide, a mere 388,000 Armenians remained in the Ottoman Empire.

Since this horrific event, Turkey has repeatedly denied that the genocide took place. They considered it a "necessary war measure" because the Armenians acted as enemies. A long-term effort to get the United States to recognize the event as a genocide began many years ago. The United States refuses to do so in an effort to avoid any conflict with Turkey, which is one of its most powerful allies.

For the 100th anniversary, concerts and ceremonies were held in Armenia to honor the dead. Kim and Khloe Kardashian, who are both of Armenian descent, recently visited the country to pay their respects. Kim Kardashian's husband, Kanye West, performed at one of the ceremonies. On April 24, Armenians will gather in Istanbul's Taksim Square to commemorate the dead. (Sources: New York Times, History.com)



ONE CENTURY LATER: On April 24, many Armenians held memorial ceremonies to commemorate the 1.5 million slaughtered Armenians.