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PART B6

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
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To: H
Subject: Fw: Trip Clip: WSJ: Clinton Plays Up 'Frank' Talks With China

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From: Nuland, Victoria J
Sent: Friday, September 07, 2012 01:25 AM
To: Campbell, Kurt M; 'Daniel_R._Russel' Sullivan, Jacob J; Reines, Philippe I
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This is good.

From: PA Clips [mailto:paclips@state.gov]
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ASIA NEWS

Updated September 6, 2012, 12:50 p.m. ET

Clinton Plays Up 'Frank' Talks With China

By PATRICK BARTA

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton put a positive spin on meetings with Chinese leaders earlier this week that yielded little visible progress on diplomatic disputes, saying the relationship between the two superpowers is mature enough to withstand differences.

Nearing the final leg of her 11-day Asia-Pacific tour with Thursday stops in East Timor and Brunei, Mrs. Clinton also sought to dial back speculation that she was visiting the smaller nations in an effort to counter Chinese influence in the region.

"We are not here against any other country," she said. "We happen to believe that Asia and the Pacific are quite big enough for many countries to participate in the activities of the region."

Her stops, which included a tour of a coffee plantation in Connecticut-sized East Timor, followed her visit to Beijing, where she and Chinese leaders appeared far apart on key issues such as how to end Syria's civil war and resolve territorial disputes in the resource-rich South China Sea. Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi dismissed the idea that there was a serious problem in the South China Sea, saying the historical record supported its claims there, and said solutions to the Syrian crisis shouldn't be imposed by outside countries.

Mrs. Clinton was also greeted skeptically by Chinese state media, which questioned whether U.S. officials were trying to drive a wedge between Beijing and other countries across the region.

"As was evident yesterday, there is a huge amount going on where the United States and China need to consult," Mrs. Clinton said, also mentioning issues including Iran, North Korea and the global economic recovery. "Even when we disagree, believe me, we can talk very frankly now. We can explore the toughest issues without imperiling the whole relationship," she said.

"The United States, certainly I, am not going to shy away from standing up for our strategic interests, and in expressing clearly where we differ," she added. Mr. Yang called the talks "constructive and fruitful," state media said.

Analysts widely believe Mrs. Clinton's trip is partly intended to rally leaders in other Asian nations to forge a common position on issues such as how to settle disputes in the South China Sea, which is claimed in whole by China and in part by Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and others. The U.S. says it doesn't take sides in territorial disputes, but says it has an interest in maintaining freedom of navigation in the sea, which is home to some of the world's most critical shipping lanes.

Her trip comes two months ahead of a major regional summit in Phnom Penh in November where U.S. leaders are expected to continue pressing for a code of conduct to govern conflicts in the sea. China has opposed efforts to settle disagreements at multilateral forums and says it prefers to handle them on a bilateral basis.

Her stop in Brunei, meanwhile, took her to a tiny petrostate of only about 400,000 people that nevertheless will carry more weight next year when it is slated to host a series of major meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, an increasingly important regional bloc which U.S. officials hope can serve as a check on growing Chinese diplomatic sway. Brunei also has claims in the South China Sea, as well as experience in hammering out joint-development agreements for oil and gas in contested waters, which could be applied to disputes in the sea.

A senior U.S. State Department official traveling with Mrs. Clinton from East Timor to Brunei acknowledged it was likely tensions would remain high for the foreseeable future. "I do think we have to be prepared for more tension on some of these matters," the official said. "I think this is the new normal."

But U.S. officials played down the strategic imperative of visiting East Timor, instead arguing Mrs. Clinton's stop there was intended mainly to recognize the country's significant progress since it gained independence from Indonesia a decade ago, capped with a democratic election this year. Even so, U.S. officials have supported the idea of admitting East Timor into the 10-member Asean bloc, which could enhance its strategic significance.

Mrs. Clinton heads next to Vladivostok, Russia, where she'll be attending an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit this weekend.

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