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This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 CANBERRA 000879

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NOFORN

STATE FOR EAP AND EAP/ANP MANILA PASS KOROR, KOLONIA AND MAJURO WELLINGTON PASS APIA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/18/2015 TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER MARR AS CH TW ID TT ARF APEC NK SK SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA: EAP A/S HILL'S DFAT ROUNDTABLE, SESSION ONE: DPRK, CHINA, TAIWAN, EAST ASIAN ARCHITECTURE, SOUTHEAST ASIA

Classified By: CDA Bill Stanton. Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

Summary

¶1. (C) In a May 17 roundtable attended by senior Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) officials, DFAT Deputy Secretary Geoff Raby told EAP Assistant Secretary Christopher R. Hill that Australia supports the U.S. approach to the DPRK nuclear problem and would continue to convey to North Korea, and others, that the Six Party Talks should resume without delay and without preconditions. Australia has high hopes for its economic relationship with China and is keen to see the improvement in U.S.-China relations continue. PM Howard will convey this sentiment, along with his optimism about the opportunity for the U.S. and Australia to dramatically improve relations with Indonesia, to President Bush when they meet in Washington in July. The GOA, meanwhile, is keeping a cautious but hopeful eye on China-Taiwan relations and believes Australia has overcome Chinese resistance to its inclusion in the upcoming East Asian Summit (EAS). Canberra and Dili are putting the finishing touches on the Timor Sea negotiations, but Australian officials are worried about the toll that rampant corruption is taking on the stability of East Timor. The Australians think it likely that Rangoon will drop its claim on the 2006 ASEAN chairmanship at some point in coming weeks. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) EAP Assistant Secretary Christopher R. Hill, accompanied by Charge, met on May 17 with Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Deputy Secretary Geoff Raby (Under Secretary equivalent) and

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his principal advisers at a roundtable to discuss East Asian issues. The first session focused on the DPRK, China, East Asian architecture, and South East Asia. Septel will report on second session discussions. A full participants' list is at para 14.

DPRK

¶3. (C) D/S Raby began the meeting by emphasizing Australia's support of the U.S. approach to the North Korean problem, and noting that the GOA took every opportunity to underline Australia's support for the Six Party Talks (6PT) in both its regional diplomacy and, most important, its direct contacts with the DPRK. (Note: Australia maintains diplomatic relations with Pyongyang and there is a North Korean ambassador resident in Canberra.) A/S Hill responded to Raby's request for a 6PT update by describing the USG's most recent initiatives to secure North Korea's return to the talks.

CHINA...AND TAIWAN

¶4. (C) Foreshadowing the message Australian Prime Minister John Howard would convey to President Bush when they meet in July, Raby said that the GOA viewed the deepening of the U.S.-China relationship post-9/11, and a shift away from the perception of China as a strategic competitor, as an important and positive development. U.S. management of the relationship with China was of critical importance to Australia, he emphasized, particularly given DFAT's

"perhaps somewhat more sanguine" view of China's rise and rapidly growing economic ties. Raby said it would be a pity if disagreements over trade and currency put a "hard edge" back into U.S.-China relations. Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet First Assistant Secretary for International Affairs Ian Kemish added that the rise of China was exerting a "pull on GOA policy settings," and the lack of bilateral aggravations in Australia's dealings with China made it hard for many, especially in the media, to see China other than as a positive story.

¶5. (S) A/S Hill responded that the U.S. wanted to see China succeed as a responsible and stable power. Deputy Secretary Zoellick's participation in the upcoming

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U.S.-China global dialogue, and an ambitious bilateral summit agenda for this year, were signs of improvement in U.S.-China relations. A/S Hill cautioned, however, that the all-too-frequent "thuggish" behavior by Beijing, such as its handling of the recent anti-Japan demonstrations, served to remind us that there were very good reasons to closely monitor China's rise. Raby agreed that Beijing's continuing human rights abuses and its recent support of the anti-Japanese mobs were "throwbacks" that justified concern. DFAT First Assistant Secretary (FAS) for International Security David Stuart amplified the call for caution, noting that while Beijing had legislated counter-proliferation regimes, enforcement was "a mixed picture, with missile technology proliferation...a real problem."

¶6. (S) Turning to Taiwan, D/S Raby noted that Chen Shui-bian had been generally circumspect in his behavior toward China since his setback in the Legislative Yuan elections last fall and asked whether Washington perceived an opportunity for a breakthrough on cross-Strait relations. A/S Hill responded that China was playing a "high-stakes game" in hosting opposition leaders Lien Chan and James Soong in Beijing, but that so far the gambit appeared to be having a positive impact on cross-Strait ties. A/S Hill thought that better Beijing-Taipei relations might also make China more amenable to playing a more constructive role in the 6PT.

#### EAST ASIAN ARCHITECTURE

¶7. (C) DFAT North Asia Branch A/S Jeff Robinson began the session on East Asian architecture by noting that Australia, Japan, and the U.S. should cooperate to ensure that China would not dominate the agendas of developing regional organizations. Raby agreed, adding that despite China's earlier attempts to block the inclusion of Australia in the East Asian Summit (EAS), Beijing's "evolving view" of the EAS signaled its recognition that ASEAN states were determined to broaden EAS membership to ensure that China would not dominate it. Raby added that despite progress on the EAS, it was important that the U.S. and Australia continue to "build up APEC" as an influential organ.

¶8. (C/NF) A/S Hill agreed with Raby on the importance of APEC and said that many of his ASEAN Plus Three (APT) interlocutors had spoken positively about Australian inclusion in the EAS. Raby replied that while he personally found it "galling," the GOA would probably sign ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), with caveats, as a precondition to joining the EAS. Australia was looking favorably at the South Korean model for acceding to the TAC with reservations that would guarantee that there would not be an impact on the GOA's commitment to the ANZUS alliance or its ability to criticize other EAS members. The deal would also have to come with an explicit guarantee that Australia would be invited to participate in the first and all subsequent EAS meetings.

#### SOUTHEAST ASIA

¶9. (C) D/S Raby said that PM Howard would emphasize to President Bush in July the rare opportunity Australia and the U.S., the two largest tsunami relief donors, had been given to improve relations with Indonesia. A/S Hill agreed; the U.S. wanted to make the most of the boost America's image had received post-tsunami. Indonesian President Yudhoyono's visit later in the month would provide a key opportunity. Responding to A/S Hill's query about the Aceh peace talks, FAS for South and South East Asia Paul Grigson said that while there had been progress on the easy elements of the negotiations, the "hard stuff lies ahead."

¶10. (C) Turning to ASEAN, Grigson thought it was likely, but by no means certain, that Rangoon could be persuaded by other ASEAN members to relinquish its claim to the ASEAN chairmanship in 2006. Grigson, who had been Australia's ambassador in Burma, described the Rangoon leadership as not having a coherent foreign policy, but rather being

"event managers, who will probably step aside six-to-twelve months out if they assess that the other ASEAN states are serious" in their demands for political reform as a precondition of Burmese chairmanship.

¶11. (C) On East Timor, D/S Raby said that the Timor Sea negotiations were almost completed, but that corruption was so rampant in Dili that the prospect of introducing oil wealth into the country was the source of more pessimism and fear than optimism within the GOA. The good news, he said, was that the UN Mission in Support of East Timor (UNMISSET) was over and the shift to peace-building under the UN Office in East Timor (UNOTIL) might, over time, increase oversight and accountability at all levels of government there.

PARTICIPANTS

¶12. (U). Australian participants:

DFAT Deputy Secretary Geoff Raby  
Americas/Europe Division First Assistant Secretary (FAS)  
Jeremy Newman  
International Security Division FAS David Stuart  
South and South East Asia Division FAS Paul Grigson  
North East Asia Assistant Secretaries Paul Robillard and  
Jeff Robinson  
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet FAS for  
International Policy Ian Kemish.

U.S. participants:

Assistant Secretary Hill  
Charge  
PolCouns  
EconCouns  
EAP Special Assistant Koehler  
PolOff (notetaker)

¶13. (U) A/S Hill's delegation has cleared this cable.  
STANTON