

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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**Statement by the President on the Birthday of Aung San Suu Kyi**

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary  
For Immediate Release  
June 18, 2010

I wish to convey my best wishes to Aung San Suu Kyi, the world's only imprisoned Nobel Peace Laureate, on the occasion of her 65th birthday on June 19. Her determination, courage, and personal sacrifice in working for human rights and democratic change in Burma inspire all of us who stand for freedom and justice. I once again call on the Burmese government to release Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally and to allow them to build a more stable, prosperous Burma that respects the rights of all its citizens. Towards this end, I encourage all stakeholders in Burma to engage in genuine dialogue towards national reconciliation, a vital step to set Burma on a more positive course for the future.

**Statement by Philip J. Crowley, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Office of the Spokesman  
For Immediate Release  
June 18, 2010  
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**Aung San Suu Kyi's 65th Birthday**

The United States extends warmest wishes to Aung San Suu Kyi on the occasion of her 65th birthday on June 19. Her enduring struggle for the fundamental right of all people of Burma to live in freedom continues to inspire people the world over.

Sadly, she marks yet another birthday under house arrest; the world's only imprisoned Nobel Laureate. We call on Burma's leaders to free her, along with her fellow political prisoners, immediately and without condition. Such an action would demonstrate a commitment to the brighter future the Burmese people so richly deserve and would help set the stage for true national reconciliation. We look forward to the day when Aung San Suu Kyi and all of Burma's people may celebrate in freedom.

**Secretary Clinton Urges Support for Kyrgyz Efforts to Restore Order**

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration is working with the United Nations and others in the international community in support of efforts by Kyrgyzstan's provisional government to restore order and is trying to provide humanitarian aid as ethnic violence continues to flare in the southern part of the country, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told reporters June 18.

Speaking at the State Department along with visiting Danish Foreign Minister Lene Espersen, Clinton also said the United States is working to provide humanitarian assistance to neighboring Uzbekistan, which has allowed more than 110,000 ethnic Uzbek refugees into the country since the violence began in Kyrgyzstan June 10.

Kyrgyzstan's provisional leader, interim President Roza Otunbayeva, estimated June 18 that more than 2,000 people may have been killed thus far in the clashes between Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks.

Clinton said the provisional government's planned referendum on a new constitution, scheduled for June 27, is at risk. "They are, unfortunately, under very difficult conditions trying to determine whether they can go forward with that vote. And some have argued that one of the potential reasons for the violence was to prevent the constitutional referendum from going forward," she said.

However, the secretary said it is still "premature to conclude what the source of this outbreak of violence is," adding, "There are many different factors at work."

"Our bottom line is: work with the international community to try to support the provisional government in bringing about a resumption of order; work with Uzbekistan, which has opened its borders to tens of thousands of fleeing Uzbeks; work to get humanitarian aid in as quickly and comprehensively as possible, and then see if you can stabilize the situation," she said.

Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert Blake joined Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Mike Posner in Uzbekistan June 18 to visit camps that have been set up to shelter the ethnic Uzbek refugees and to hear their accounts of the violence.

Blake told reporters at Andijan Airport that approximately 75,000 of the estimated 110,000 refugees now have registered with the Uzbek government. The Obama administration is responding to appeals from the

International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, as well as the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and plans to provide up to \$5 million to help cover their activities in both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, he said.

"We will provide an initial contribution of \$2.8 million to the UNHCR to assist the refugees in Uzbekistan. We have also released an initial \$50,000 from our worldwide disaster fund to assess the situation and meet gaps in the current international assistance package," Blake said. "We hope that this assistance in combination with that provided by government of Uzbekistan, the United Nations and others will help ease the plight of those who have been affected by this terrible tragedy."

He praised the Uzbek government's quick and constructive actions to receive the refugees and cooperate with international relief organizations, saying, "Uzbekistan's leadership and initiative have saved many lives and mitigated the suffering of thousands of vulnerable people." The United States is committed to helping the country cope with the refugees, he added.

Blake said he and Posner spoke to refugees while visiting the camps. "Many of them told us of stories that their loved ones had been killed and that women had suffered rapes, and, obviously, this calls for an investigation," he said.

Calling on Kyrgyzstan's provisional government to take immediate steps to stop the violence, Blake also urged it to launch an investigation into what caused the violence, and also to ensure that perpetrators will be held accountable.

Blake also said a Kyrgyz investigation should be complemented by an international investigation conducted by a "credible international body" because "there are so many ethnic Uzbek refugees here in Uzbekistan whose stories will be an important part of this investigation."

In Geneva, the U.N. Human Rights Council, in a June 18 resolution that passed unanimously, also condemned the provocations and the violence in southern Kyrgyzstan and urged a "full and transparent investigation" and accountability.

Ambassador Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe, the U.S. representative to the Human Rights Council, said June 18 that the situation in Kyrgyzstan "requires a response from the international community on multiple fronts," including stopping the violence, ensuring international borders remain open and providing humanitarian relief.

Donahoe said that on June 16 the United States "committed over \$32.2 million in assistance for programs for humanitarian relief, reconstruction, and community stabilization," which will be used to meet immediate relief needs as well as efforts to address the roots of the conflict through community development and conflict mitigation programs. "We expect additional efforts to be announced in the near future," she added.

### **Reform Must Ensure Stability of Financial System**

By Merle David Kellerhals, Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington – Focusing supervision too narrowly on the safety and soundness of individual financial institutions can blind regulators to emerging threats to financial stability that cut across many companies or markets, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke says.

That means that a critical building block for success in financial supervision is a requirement that all financial institutions considered "too big to fail" be subjected to consolidated supervision, Bernanke says. It means that one regulator must be responsible and able to review the full range of activities of such institutions, he added.

"Before the recent financial crisis, many major financial firms – including investment banks like Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers and large insurance companies like American International Group – were able to avoid robust comprehensive supervision," Bernanke said at the Squam Lake Conference in New York June 16. "In the future, all firms that present systemic risks – regardless of whether they happen to own an insured depository institution – must be subject to a common, comprehensive framework of supervision and regulation."

Bernanke said that financial reform bills that were passed by the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate would expand and strengthen consolidated supervision of companies whose failure would pose risks to the entire financial system. Those measures are now being consolidated by a conference committee of senators and representatives and will be returned to both chambers for final consideration before being sent to the president for final action. Congress set a target of July 4 for sending the reform package to President Obama.

A report from the Squam Lake Group, which is a small group of economists from major U.S. colleges and policy research centers, has recommended that a single regulator be assigned responsibility for overseeing the health of the overall U.S. financial system. The group recommended that the nation's central bank – the U.S. Federal Reserve – have that responsibility. Bernanke said the Federal

Reserve should be extensively involved in the collective effort to promote financial stability.

“The reasons for this involvement include the central bank’s breadth of expertise and its traditional roles in promoting financial stability and serving as a backstop liquidity [cash] provider to the financial system,” Bernanke said. But he cautioned that giving total supervisory responsibility to a single regulator risks creating blind spots, especially in the skills and experience needed to oversee the many parts of a complex financial system.

The Federal Reserve prefers that all regulatory agencies be required routinely to factor broad considerations into supervision, thus helping ensure that risks to financial stability can be addressed wherever they arise, he added.

And to minimize future financial crisis like the recession of 2008–2009, Bernanke said reform will require tougher standards for financial institutions, as well as more intense supervision. These institutions should have to meet stronger capital and liquidity standards along with “more-stringent” risk-management requirements, he added.

The Federal Reserve is already working domestically and internationally to increase the quantity and quality of “regulatory capital” – cash on hand – that banks are required to hold, he said. The thrust of those requirements is to make companies better able to withstand systemwide shocks.

“To be sure, reasonable transition periods will be necessary to allow banks to meet these more demanding standards without unduly constricting credit or endangering the recovery,” Bernanke said.

The Squam Lake Group on Financial Regulation is a nonpartisan, nonaffiliated group of 15 academics and policy specialists who came together to offer guidance on the reform of financial regulation. The group took its name from its first meeting at New Hampshire's Squam Lake in fall 2008 amid the deepening capital-markets crisis.

#### G20 SUMMIT

Bernanke and U.S. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner recently returned from a conference in Busan, South Korea, of finance ministers and central bank governors of the Group of 20 (G20) major economies. The G20 is trying to make sure it has a strong, common strategy for economic growth and for financial reforms.

“Last year, the G20 acted to restore growth to a world in crisis. Because we acted together, the global economy is

expanding again,” Geithner said June 5 at a meeting of G20 finance ministers and central bank governors. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has forecast global growth to exceed 4 percent this year and in 2011.

The finance ministers and central bankers met June 4–5 to prepare for the G20 Summit in Toronto on June 26–27. A second G20 summit is scheduled for Seoul, South Korea, November 11–12. The economic talks focused on two core priorities: economic growth and financial reform, Geithner said. The ministers reaffirmed support for the current recovery in private demand across the G20 economies, and also agreed on the need for reforms that would support short-term demand and boost longer-term growth.

#### Alliance Works for Improved Influenza Surveillance in Africa

Flu seasonal in temperate regions, but infects people all year in tropics

By Cheryl L Pellerin  
Science Writer

Washington – As the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that more than 214 countries have confirmed cases of H1N1 pandemic influenza and at least 18,156 people have died, representatives from 33 African nations met for the first time in Morocco to discuss the impact of flu on that continent.

The meeting, held in Marrakech June 3–4 and organized by the United Nations, included U.N. technical partners such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. National Institutes of Health and its Fogarty International Center, the German Technical Cooperation enterprise GDZ, Fondation Mérieux, the Institut Pasteur International Network and the Programme for Appropriate Technology in Health.

It is important to study flu in the mostly tropical setting of Africa because flu is a different disease in the tropics than it is in Earth’s temperate regions. In temperate regions like Europe and the United States, flu is a seasonal illness that circulates during the cold months.

In the tropics, according to a 2007 study by Peter Palese of Mount Sinai Medical School in New York and colleagues, flu circulates in people year round with possible increases during rainy seasons. Researchers don't know why flu is seasonal in temperate zones and circulates all year in the tropics.

“The influenza pandemic in Africa has a very different pattern than in the rest of the world,” Dr. Sylvie Briand, head of the WHO Global Influenza Programme, told America.gov. “For example, H1N1 reached western

Africa very late in the course of the pandemic, only in the beginning of 2010. Depending on the country, the burden seems to vary a lot, so we thought that it was a good time to come together and see how flu behaves on the African continent and what can be done about it."

#### MONITORING INFLUENZA

Flu viruses are important disease-causing microbes, and flu-related respiratory tract infections like pneumonia are a major cause of death in Africa, particularly among children.

As of June 6, according to WHO, in sub-Saharan Africa, pandemic flu continued to circulate at low levels in parts of West Africa, especially in Ghana. During the most recent reporting week, 13 percent of all respiratory samples tested positive for H1N1 in Ghana. Small numbers of seasonal H3N2 viruses have been detected in Kenya and Tanzania since late May.

As the pandemic progressed around the world after it began in April 2009, WHO routinely gathered information from developed nations about flu and other respiratory illnesses. Such information was harder to come by from many developing countries, which often do not have the resources or capacity to monitor infectious diseases.

"Industrialized countries have what we call sentinel systems, which means that you take some geographical sites of general [health] practitioners whose patients represent a certain portion of the population," Briand said. "These sentinel sites report on influenzalike illness and they are asked to take samples of, for example, one of every 10 patients in a kind of strategy to [monitor] circulating viruses."

The outpatient influenzalike illness surveillance is usually coupled with severe respiratory illness surveillance in hospitals, she added, to find out how many of the influenzalike illnesses are severe.

In developing countries, where only large cities have laboratories that can identify the flulike illnesses, "we are trying to develop new strategies, like in Madagascar where they do reporting by mobile phone," Briand said. "They test a limited number of patients, but they have more exhaustive reporting of influenzalike illness, for example. And they couple the surveillance with rapid tests."

Rapid tests are not as accurate as laboratory testing, but such tests are used only for surveillance and not to determine if someone needs treatment.

"Flu symptoms are not specific so it can be confounded with many other respiratory diseases," she said. "Many

influenza cases only have fever. In tropical countries there are so many sources of fever — you have dengue, malaria and a number of other infectious diseases whose first symptom is fever."

In tropical countries, it is hard to know if someone has flu if there is no laboratory to confirm the diagnosis.

#### AFRICA FLU ALLIANCE

In Marrakech, senior officials from African ministries of health and representatives of health partners and international agencies discussed strategies and defined priorities like what information is needed for surveillance and how to collect the information.

"We heard that the pandemic situation led countries to gather much more information than they do usually on respiratory disease, so reviewing what has happened in the past year may give us a better understanding of influenza in Africa," Briand said.

The informal alliance is seeking partners and ultimately intends to establish an Internet-based platform where African countries and others can share information and benefit from each other's experience.

"First, we will publish a road map that identifies priorities and we will ask partners what they plan to do in each area of work. Maybe next year we will have another meeting to see the progress," Briand said. "The main objective is really to create a platform for discussion among different stakeholders and to enhance synergies."

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