

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## President Obama's Statement on 45th Anniversary of Voting Rights Act

*Act serves as culmination of hard work to fulfill America's promise*

The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary  
August 6, 2010

Statement by President Obama on the 45th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act

Today we celebrate the 45th Anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, one of the most historic and groundbreaking pieces of legislation in our nation's history. For those who marched bravely; who worked tirelessly; who shed their blood and gave their lives in the pursuit of freedom for every American, the Act served as the culmination of decades of work to fulfill America's promise. And for the members of the Moses Generation – including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks, who stood alongside President Johnson when he signed the bill into law – it was an affirmation that although the arc of the moral universe may be long, it bends toward justice.

The Voting Rights Act guaranteed African Americans the right to vote at a time when thousands were being disenfranchised across the country. It extended the protection of our Constitution to every citizen regardless of race or religion; color or creed. And in the 45 years since it was passed, the Act has been reaffirmed four times – each one a reminder that we must remain vigilant in guaranteeing access to the ballot box.

As we pause to reflect on the anniversary of that historic moment, I encourage every American to honor the legacy of the brave men and women who came before us – from the foot soldiers to the Freedom Riders – by exercising the rights they fought so hard to guarantee. And together let us recommit ourselves, in ways large and small, to continuing their journey to promote equality and perfect our union.

## Ninth AGOA Forum Embraces Agribusiness

By Charles W. Corey  
Staff Writer

Kansas City, Missouri – After spending two days in Washington, the ninth annual U.S.-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum – better known as the AGOA Forum – departed from its usual format to move the event closer to business in America's heartland and promote direct business networking, particularly in agriculture.

A feature added this year was a trade fair where about 25 American and African businesses, large and small, displayed their goods, networked and looked for potential partners and investors. One new face to the AGOA Forum was American businessman William Kuzma, vice president of Natural Enrichment Industries, located in Illinois.

Kuzma's company produces tricalcium phosphate to help bolster the calcium content of many different foods. It can also be used to bolster calcium levels in pet and animal foods. It is especially important for women because two out of four women over the age of 50 have soft bones caused by a lack of calcium in their diets, he said.

"Calcium is principally important for young children as well because if they don't get the calcium they need in the early part of life, they suffer many other problems as they grow," he said.

Kuzma told America.gov he had just returned from Senegal and South Africa and was impressed with what he saw as a potential market for his company's product. Although doing business and being prosperous is important, Kuzma said, improving people's health, especially in Africa, is also of major importance.

"We will get something out of " an expansion to Africa, "but will also donate" some products to help people, he pledged. "We think that the calcium deficiency, particularly in Third World countries, is pretty severe."

Kuzma, a retired coal company executive, said his wife decided that more could be done than sitting around in retirement. "So she bought this company, which was in bankruptcy. We have 30 people on the payroll and we are trying to make our contribution."

Kuzma said the U.S. government could play a valuable role for his company by lending some of its expertise in Africa and making the proper introductions. He said he is already starting to work with U.S. government agencies.

After doing much study and research, he said, "I think it is a marvelous opportunity for people to take the time now to consider commerce in Africa." Africa has a wealth of natural resources, a large and ready work force and many governments, both inside and outside Africa, have a strong interest in making things better there, he added.

Kuzma recalled his younger years when he had very few resources. "I started out in high school and did not have very much. But once I came up through the coal industry, I found that a little economic background makes a big difference in your reception and what doors you can open. People will listen and talk to you."

That, he said, is a fundamental building block for greater economic growth, development and progress: generating wealth to improve people's lives.

Ismail Aderogba, the head of product quality assurance and research at Multi-Trex Integrated Foods in Lagos, Nigeria, was also at the AGOA Forum displaying his company's products and looking for ways to export to the U.S. market. Multi-Trex processes cocoa butter, cocoa cake and cocoa beans. His company is exporting to Europe but wants to bring its products to the United States, he said.

Aderogba said his product line is already making it to the United States through European middlemen. "That just increases costs to Americans," he said.

Another African business executive looking to expand in the U.S. market was Togbetse Kossi V. Orphee, director general of Togo-based Radex Foods.

"We are expecting to export palm oil, palm wine, hibiscus flour. We have also maize flour" for export to the United States. His company is now exporting in limited quantities to the United States, Orphee said, but "we are expecting to meet some suppliers to enlarge our shipments."

"We are looking for a partner in specialty foods," he said, to break into the U.S. market in a larger way. His company is now working with the U.S. Agency for International Development's West Africa Trade and Competiveness Hub to expand its markets in the United States.

### **High-Tech Democracy Activists Facing New Challenges**

*Internet experts say some governments use social media for repression*

By Gabriella Krohmal  
Staff Writer

Washington — Internet freedom advocates say many of the same technological advances that have given pro-democracy movements a voice are now being used to suppress them.

Regimes are monitoring photos, videos and messages posted online. Tracking and tracing tools allow them to locate activists who use the Internet and target them directly. And some governments are "using the Internet in smart ways not only to conduct censorship, but real-time surveillance and repression," said Robert Guerra, project director for Internet freedom at Freedom House, speaking at a Washington event sponsored by the Foreign Policy Initiative on Internet activists and authoritarian regimes.

The Obama administration has made Internet freedom a priority issue, with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton delivering a major speech on the topic in January.

"Both the American people and nations that censor the Internet should understand that our government is committed to helping promote Internet freedom," she said. Clinton also warned that "technologies with the potential to open up access to government and promote transparency can also be hijacked by governments to crush dissent and deny human rights."

One example was offered at the recent forum by Oscar Morales, creator of One Million Voices Against the FARC, a Facebook-based campaign against the extremist group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Morales said student activists working in Venezuela have become targets of government surveillance. Police recently raided the students' headquarters, Morales said, and took their computer hard drives and contact lists.

Cynthia Wong, a fellow at the Center for Democracy and Technology who spoke at the event, said some governments are using sites such as Facebook to persecute expatriate activists, "to identify family members of activists on the ground, to target family members in-country and essentially intimidate people into silence."

This doesn't mean that pro-democracy activists should stop using the Internet to advance their cause, Internet freedom advocates say — only that they need to be more aware of the medium's limitations and governments' surveillance abilities, and to be careful about what they post online.

"I think people have come to view the Internet in idealistic terms, even though today it is very clear that there is as much danger and peril in the Internet as there is promise," said Bob Boorstin, director of corporate and policy communication at Google Inc.

Wong, Boorstin and Guerra focused much of their presentations on the pervasive Internet censorship of China and Iran, but they said many other countries try to control their populations' access to information.

Over the last few years, pro-democracy activists have increasingly relied on the Internet to communicate with each other and the rest of the world. They have arranged demonstrations using Facebook and Twitter. They have built popular support for their causes abroad by uploading photos and videos and by posting event updates online. The wave of angry demonstrations around the world sparked by videos of Neda Agha-Soltan being shot to death during post-election protests in Iran in 2009 showed the power of the Internet to inspire action.

Guerra said more governments have responded to the Internet's power by increasing censorship of it in the past five to 10 years. "We see whole continents censoring. We see free countries censoring. And that's a very different scale," he said.

#### ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

Clinton spoke of the economic consequences of constraining Internet freedom, saying, "Countries that censor news and information must recognize that from an economic standpoint, there is no distinction between censoring political speech and commercial speech. If businesses in your nations are denied access to either type of information, it will inevitably impact on growth."

Internet corporations already deal with censorship laws and government attacks on privacy rights overseas; U.S. companies must comply with sanctions against certain governments passed by the U.S. Congress and enforced by the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, Google's Boorstin said. He cited recent sanctions making it illegal for U.S.-based corporations to offer Internet services in Iran and Sudan without special authorization.

Despite the difficulties, Boorstin said, Internet corporations are doing their best to promote Internet freedom worldwide. "Our responsibility at Google, we feel, is to do everything we can to maximize access to information and to promote freedom of expression," he said.

Google and the Center for Democracy and Technology participate in the Global Network Initiative, an organization created by corporations, advocacy groups and research centers interested in promoting Internet freedom. Boorstin said Google is proud to call itself an adherent to the Global Network Initiative's principles: that freedom of expression is an essential human right, that Internet users be protected against illegal government attempts to circumvent their privacy and that company policies pursue these principles.

Ultimately, Wong said, "one of the goals from our perspective is to really ensure that the Internet and mobile technologies and other technologies remain positive forces for promoting human rights, for promoting democratic values and for promoting economic development."

#### **Fourth Woman in U.S. History to Serve on Highest Court**

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr., Staff Writer

Washington — Former Harvard Law School Dean Elena Kagan becomes the 112th justice to serve on the U.S.

Supreme Court, but she is only the fourth woman chosen to serve on the nation's highest court.

"For nearly two centuries, there wasn't a single woman on our nation's highest court. When Elena takes her seat on that bench, for the first time in our history, there will be three women," President Obama said August 5 shortly after the U.S. Senate voted to confirm her nomination 63-37.

Kagan was Obama's second appointment to the Supreme Court since taking office 20 months ago, and both of his nominees were women — Kagan and Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who was confirmed August 6, 2009. Kagan also joins on the bench Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Former Justice Sandra Day O'Connor became the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court in 1981.

"It is, as Ruth Bader Ginsburg recently stated, 'one of the most exhilarating developments' — a sign of progress that I relish not just as a father who wants limitless possibilities for my two daughters, but as an American proud that our Supreme Court will be more inclusive, more representative and more reflective of us as a people than ever before," Obama said while traveling in Chicago.

"Elena understands that the law isn't just an abstraction or an intellectual exercise," Obama added. "She knows that the Supreme Court's decisions shape not just the character of our democracy, but the circumstances of our daily lives — or, as she once put it, that 'behind the law there are stories — stories of people's lives as shaped by the law, stories of people's lives as might be changed by law.'"

While critics of Kagan's nomination said she had never served previously as a judge, one-third of the 111 Americans who have served on the high court before her also never were judges, according to Senator Christopher Dodd.

Kagan testified over several days before the Senate Judiciary Committee and responded to 540 questions from senators, both at the hearing and in written responses.

"I'd say they got a pretty good look at Elena Kagan," Obama said. "They've gotten a good sense of her formidable intelligence, her rich understanding of our Constitution, her commitment to the rule of law."

#### SWEARING-IN CEREMONIES

Kagan, who is the current U.S. solicitor general, will be sworn in twice at the Supreme Court as the successor to retired Justice John Paul Stevens.

Chief Justice John Roberts will administer one oath prescribed by the U.S. Constitution during a private ceremony in the Justices' Conference Room at the Supreme Court with only members of her family present. Roberts will administer a second oath, taken by judges, with her family and friends present, and with members of the press in attendance. Kagan will not be formally installed as a Supreme Court justice until October 1 in a courtroom ceremony at the start of the court's new term.

The constitutionally mandated ceremonies and confirmation process are not just ritual, but also the beginning of a transformation process from lawyer to justice. The Supreme Court represents the third branch of the American government, holding equal stature with the executive branch, represented by the president, and the legislative branch, represented by the U.S. Congress. Each branch provides checks and balances on the others.

In its broadest context, the Supreme Court settles two questions: issues related to the U.S. Constitution and, more rarely, questions of legal boundaries among the nation's 50 states — a reflection of a nation that began as 13 colonies in the easternmost part of the United States. And in rare instances, the Supreme Court hears cases involving disputes between the United States and other nations.

#### AMERICAN WOMEN AND THE COURTS

According to a study published in 2010 (PDF, 445KB) on women in U.S. federal and state-level judgeships, Kagan's elevation to the Supreme Court falls short of equal representation of women on the nation's federal and state benches. "In the U.S., women make up only 22 percent of all federal judgeships and 26 percent of all state-level positions," according to the study, prepared by the Center for Women in Government & Civil Society at the State University of New York at Albany.

"With respect to women's share of federal judgeships, only [the states of] New Jersey and Connecticut achieved critical mass of 33 percent, the point at which women start exercising significant influence," the study's authors said.

In the United States, women make up 48 percent of law school graduates and 45 percent of associates in private law firms. Women also serve extensively in federal, state and local government agencies as lawyers.

#### United States Expanding Its Engagement with Central Asia

*Donors' conference, OSCE vital to recovery efforts in Kyrgyzstan*

By Howard Cincotta, Special Correspondent

Washington — In recognition of the importance of the

five Central Asia nations, the United States is deepening and broadening its engagement with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, according to Robert Blake, assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian affairs.

Along with an overview of U.S. Central Asian policy, Blake addressed recent developments in Kyrgyzstan and the international community's response in remarks in Washington at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on July 30.

Calling Central Asia "a region of significant importance to U.S. national interests," Blake said that shortly after taking office, the Obama administration undertook a comprehensive review of its policy toward the region. The result was a set of five priorities:

- Expanded cooperation to assist coalition efforts in Afghanistan.
- Development and diversification of Central Asia's energy resources.
- Support for political liberalization and respect for human rights.
- Market-oriented economic reforms.
- Strengthening of governmental institutions to prevent the emergence of failed states.

To advance these goals, the United States proposed the establishment of "annual bilateral consultations to be augmented by six-month reviews."

"Since [then], I have chaired consultations with every country in Central Asia except Kyrgyzstan," Blake said, pointing out that the Kyrgyz delegation was traveling to Washington in April when civil disturbances in the Kyrgyz Republic led to the ouster of the previous government and establishment of an interim government.

#### SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Blake rejected media criticism that the United States emphasizes the security aspects of its relationship in Central Asia over issues of civil society and human rights. Using a dialogue "of mutual respect and understanding" to create a positive atmosphere is a first step, Blake said, adding, "I think we have accomplished that." With that foundation, "this administration has not shied away from discussing frankly, fully, and openly human rights issues or the state of civil society."

Specifically, he denied that the United States had avoided criticism of former Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's human rights record out of concern for maintaining the transit center at Manas International Airport in Kyrgyzstan. "I can assure you that we raised human rights at every meeting with the Bakiyev

government that I attended," Blake said.

"U.S. officials also held meetings with the political opposition in Bishkek and Washington when the Bakiyev government was in power, and we won't shy away from meeting with the opposition to today's government in Bishkek or talking with the government about respecting human rights," Blake said.

"The Obama administration will not compromise our values," Blake said. "But it will seek dialogue and engagement with all our partners."

#### NO ASIAN "GREAT GAME"

Blake characterized the perception of an international competition for influence in Central Asia – historically termed the "Great Game" – as "good news copy or blogs, but it has little basis in reality."

In reality, he said, the United States is conducting a nuanced policy designed to establish "mature bilateral relations" based on U.S. policy interests and each country's specific situation and concerns.

"We recognize that other countries have interests in Central Asia," Blake said. "But we don't accept any country having exclusive interests."

A more productive approach, he said, is to recognize every country's interest in promoting stability and addressing critical regional and global issues such as nonproliferation, energy security and combating terrorism and drug trafficking.

#### RECOVERY, RECONCILIATION IN KYRGYZSTAN

Along with other senior U.S. officials, Blake said he had traveled to Bishkek and held many conversations with the Kyrgyz Provisional Government since the uprising in April that overthrew the Bakiyev regime and the deadly ethnic clashes in June in southern Kyrgyzstan that resulted in the flight of more than 100,000 refugees to neighboring Uzbekistan.

Blake said he was heartened that violence has not recurred, but he found extremely high levels of fear and tension, especially among ethnic Uzbeks, in a recent visit to Kyrgyzstan's second largest city, Osh, located in the south.

The United States has outlined several key steps to chart a path back to stability and democracy, Blake said. They include strengthening security through a Police Advisory Group from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); encouraging local law enforcement and courts to rebuild community trust;

investigating the causes of the violence and holding the perpetrators accountable; and reconstructing homes destroyed in the rioting.

On June 24, President Obama and Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev issued a joint statement supporting Kyrgyzstan's efforts to restore peace and stability and urging "the use of nonviolent political methods ... for a rapid restoration of public order, civic peace and interethnic understanding." They also called for a "coordinated multilateral response to the crisis."

The international community has responded through pledges totaling \$1.1 billion at the recent Kyrgyzstan Donors Conference, including a pledge of \$48.6 million from the United States. The U.S. aid will be used for a variety of community-based projects and training, food assistance, civil society initiatives, water and sanitation projects, fertilizer and fuel for the fall harvests and contributions to the International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

Blake commended Uzbekistan for its role in taking in thousands of displaced persons, and he expressed appreciation for Kazakhstan's leadership in OSCE activities in Kyrgyzstan, which "has been at the forefront of efforts to promote peace, democracy and reconciliation."

"As a powerful economic neighbor," Blake said, "Kazakhstan has a crucial role to play in continuing to help Kyrgyzstan achieve economic and social stability."

#### Pakistan Flooding Affecting Entire Nation

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington – What makes the current emergency in Pakistan unique is that the worst monsoon flooding in 80 years is affecting the entire country, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne Patterson says.

During an August 6 teleconference press briefing from Islamabad, Patterson told reporters that "the monsoon rains arrived with a vengeance." The average monthly rainfall in Pakistan during this time of year is 2.5 inches, but in the three-day period of July 28–30, northern Pakistan received 8 inches of rain.

The United Nations estimates that nearly 1,500 people have been killed by the flooding, a million people have been made homeless, and 4.5 million people have been affected across the country as the initial floodwaters moved through the Indus River system toward the Arabian Sea, Patterson said.

According to government and U.S. Embassy reports, 92 bridges have been destroyed and more than 200 major roads have been damaged.

"There are four major dams at risk," Patterson said. "Crop and livestock loss will affect long-term livelihood and food security."

The United States continues to send relief supplies to Peshawar, where they are turned over to Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). U.S. shipments as of August 6 include 18 Zodiac inflatable rescue boats, six water filtration units, 10 water storage bladders and 30 concrete-cutting saws valued at \$746,000.

Patterson said international relief organizations believe that up to 2.5 million people will require food assistance. Compounding the crisis, she said, is that additional rains are expected this weekend, and waters will still be high well into next week.

The United States launched assistance to Pakistan on July 30 when the government asked for U.S. helicopters and aircraft that were assigned to support the Pakistan interior ministry's 50th Squadron air unit, she said.

"We agreed immediately and began to consider what other ways we could help."

By July 31, Patterson said, the U.S. Air Force was transporting thousands of halal meals on C-130 and C-17 aircraft into Rawalpindi at the Pakistani government's request. More than 436,000 halal meals from U.S. stocks in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the region have been delivered to civilian and military officials in Pakistan as of August 5.

An urgent request came from the Pakistani government to provide helicopter support to reach stranded victims and to deliver supplies in remote areas, Patterson said. The U.S. Army sent in four CH-47 Chinook cargo helicopters and two UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters. The helicopters have evacuated more than 800 people and transported more than 66,000 pounds (nearly 30,000 kilograms) of relief supplies, she said, though poor weather conditions hampered relief efforts August 6.

"The United States has already committed \$35 million in assistance to flood-affected populations," Patterson said. "The money will be provided by [the U.S. Agency for International Development] to international organizations and established Pakistani [nongovernmental organizations] to provide food, health care and shelter for those displaced by the flood."

Relief has been coordinated closely with the Pakistani government and the NDMA since the floods struck July

29.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has urged Americans to join the relief effort and send much-needed help to the people of Pakistan. A special relief line has been set up so that U.S.-based contributors can send donations by cellular telephone. Callers can text "SWAT" to the number 50555.

The caller thus will make a \$10 contribution that will help the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees provide tents, clothing, food, clean drinking water and medicine to the Pakistani people displaced by the floods, Clinton said.

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