

American

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U.S., Japanese Leaders Praise Joint Response to March 11 Tragedy

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — Military cooperation between the United States and Japan to aid victims in the aftermath of disasters brought about by the March 11 tsunami and earthquake have demonstrated the value of their 50-year alliance, U.S. and Japanese leaders said.

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said June 21 that U.S. and Japanese forces worked side by side to help the survivors of the disasters, and their cooperation “demonstrated the high level of interoperability between the U.S. and Japanese forces.”

Their work “validated years of investment by both nations in training and capabilities” and also demonstrated “the close bonds between our people and the value of this alliance,” he said.

Gates was joined by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Japanese Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto and Japanese Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa for the first Security Consultative Committee meeting between the foreign and defense ministers of both countries since 2007.

Clinton said the March 11 disasters had left tens of thousands of people dead or missing and hundreds of thousands without homes.

“The Japanese people have shown remarkable strength in the face of this unprecedented crisis. All Americans have been proud to stand with you and support your efforts to recover,” she said.

Kitazawa said the response to the earthquake brought greater understanding of “the significance of the stationing of U.S. forces in Japan,” which in turn has “brought a greater sense of security to the Japanese people.”

The countries released a joint document that said the disasters and the resulting serious emergency at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant had also given the international community important lessons on how to respond to an “unprecedented multidimensional disaster.”

“In light of Japan’s experience, it is incumbent on all countries to be better prepared to respond to complex emergencies and to assist one another in such circumstances. Of particular importance is the development of emergency plans for disasters affecting nuclear power plants,” the document says.

The two countries also discussed the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan and their continued commitment to relocating the U.S. base at Futenma elsewhere on the island of Okinawa, with the aim of minimizing the impact on local communities.

Gates said that as a Pacific power, “the U.S. remains committed to maintaining a robust forward presence in East Asia,” and the two countries are “making steady progress toward modernizing [the] U.S. forward presence in the region.”

In a joint document, both sides acknowledged that the realignment will not meet its original target date of 2014, but “confirmed their commitment” to its completion “at the earliest possible date after 2014 in order to avoid the indefinite use of the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma, while maintaining Alliance capabilities.”

Gates said it is critical that the realignment move forward, including the construction of facilities on Guam that will house 8,000 Marines currently stationed on Okinawa.

“Doing so will reduce the impact of our presence on local residents on Okinawa, while allowing us to maintain capabilities critical to the alliance in Japan,” he said.

A senior Obama administration official who asked not to be identified told reporters June 20 that the U.S. forward-deployed presence in Japan is critical to helping the United States fulfill its treaty commitments to defend Japan, contribute to peace and security in East Asia, and underscore “the overall U.S. defense posture as a resonant civic power.”

The U.S.-Japan alliance is “the cornerstone of stability in the region,” the official said, and it has “emerged from the tragedy of March 11 stronger and more vital.”

Michelle Obama Meets with Nelson Mandela in South Africa

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington — First lady Michelle Obama has met with former South African President Nelson Mandela during the first day of her official weeklong visit to southern Africa.

Obama and daughters Malia and Sasha were invited to meet with the anti-apartheid leader in his home in Johannesburg after taking a tour of his foundation nearby June 21, according to White House pool reports. The first lady’s mother, Marian Robinson, and niece and nephew, Leslie and Avery Robinson, who are traveling with her, were also invited to join. The reports said Mandela was accompanied by his wife, Graça Machel, the former first lady of Mozambique.

Mandela, 92, spent 27 years in prison for his role in the movement against apartheid, South Africa's now-abolished system of racial separation. Mandela went on to become his country's first black president, serving from 1994 to 1999.

Johannesburg was the second stop for Obama after Pretoria, where she spoke to South African leaders and U.S. Embassy employees June 21 ahead of meeting with Nompumelelo Ntuli-Zuma, wife of South African President Jacob Zuma.

After arriving in Johannesburg, the first lady and her family stopped at a day care center, where they read a book to young children. While in the city, Obama is scheduled to deliver the keynote address to a U.S.-sponsored Young African Women Leaders Forum June 22. Participants include women from across sub-Saharan Africa who are leading or are involved in social and economic initiatives in their countries.

"What we've seen in country after country is an undeniable trend that in places where women are in power, the societies are more prosperous and democratic," said presidential adviser Ben Rhodes of the National Security Council during a call with reporters June 15. "And so, we believe that it's a very important message to send that the empowerment of women and girls in Africa and around the world will help foster greater peace and prosperity."

The White House said the forum "will build on the Obama administration's ongoing engagement with the next generation of African leaders and the momentum of the August 2010 President's Forum with Young African Leaders held at the White House."

Rhodes said the first lady's trip is fundamentally connected to the president's goal of advancing democracy in Africa, and emphasized that Africa's democratic development, health and security greatly affect the future of the United States.

Obama is scheduled to meet with Archbishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa and to speak with students at the University of Cape Town before traveling to Gaborone, Botswana, where she will meet with President Ian Khama and visit a children's clinic. She is set to return to Washington June 26.

Two Former Presidents Win World Food Prize

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer

Washington — Two former presidents have won the 2011 World Food Prize.

The foundation that gives the prize has honored John

Agyekum Kufuor, president of Ghana from 2001 to 2009, and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, leader of Brazil between 2003 and 2009, for putting into place policies to alleviate hunger and poverty in their countries.

"President Kufuor and President Lula da Silva have set a powerful example for other political leaders in the world," said Kenneth Quinn, president of the World Food Prize Foundation (see organization website), which gives the award. Quinn spoke at a June 21 ceremony at the State Department.

"Both Ghana and Brazil are on track to exceed the U.N. Millennium Development Goal — to cut in half extreme hunger before 2015," Quinn said.

In 2000, 189 nations pledged at a United Nations summit to "spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty." They committed to act in concert to achieve eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015, including promoting gender equality, combating AIDS, ensuring environmental stability and eradicating poverty.

Kufuor and Lula will accept the World Food Prize at the Borlaug Dialogue international symposium in Des Moines, Iowa, on October 13. The World Food Prize was founded in 1986 by Norman Borlaug, recipient of the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize for his work in agricultural research, for whom the Iowa symposium is named.

"President Kufuor and President Lula da Silva have set the gold standard for presidential leadership in tackling the global challenges of poverty and hunger," said USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton urged African heads of state at a recent meeting of the African Union to follow Kufuor's lead and make a priority of agriculture, and allow partners like the United States and multilateral institutions to work with them to fight hunger and poverty.

The two leaders "have advanced food security for their people by pursuing innovative policies and programs," added U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack.

"Today, we need another Green Revolution ... that includes to a greater degree Africa and extends all the way from farmer to market," said Robert Hormats, undersecretary of state for economic, energy and agricultural affairs.

BOOSTING FARM YIELDS IN GHANA

Born in Kumasi, Ghana, in 1938, Kufuor began his education at one of the few schools in Ghana at the time. He went on to earn bachelor's and master's degrees from Oxford University and a law degree at Lincoln's Inn in

London.

As president, Kufuor made a priority of national agricultural policies. During his term, Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African country to cut in half the proportion of people suffering from hunger and the proportion living on less than \$1 a day. The country used its entire \$547 million grant from the Millennium Challenge Corporation, awarded in 2006, to teach farmers improved growing practices and increase their incomes. (The Millennium Challenge Corporation is a U.S. aid agency that grants money to countries that focus on good policies, country ownership of development plans and results.)

As a result, Ghana's cocoa production doubled between 2002 and 2005 and production of livestock, maize, cassava, yams and plantains increased significantly. By 2008, the country's national economy had quadrupled. Kufuor also launched a program to give schoolchildren ages 4 to 14 at least one meal a day. By the end of 2010, more than 1 million schoolchildren had benefited from the program.

PUTTING THREE MEALS ON THE TABLE

Lula was born in 1945 into a working-class family in Garanhuns, Brazil. He began working at age 12 as a factory mechanic and metalworker. That led him to a leadership position in Brazil's labor movement beginning in 1969, which in turn propelled him into national politics.

When he became president, Lula said his mission was to make it possible for all people in his country to eat three meals a day. His Zero Hunger initiative brought together government, civil society and the private sector to focus on giving people greater access to food, boosting rural family incomes, increasing primary school enrollment and empowering the poor. The initiative quickly became one of the most successful food and nutritional security policies in the world, according to the World Food Prize Foundation.

Under Zero Hunger, the Bolsa Família (Family Allowance) Program has benefited more than 12 million families by guaranteeing them a minimum income. The initiative's Food Purchase Program makes locally produced food available at schools, community restaurants and facilities aiding the oldest and youngest members of the population. The School Feeding Program provides meals to Brazil's schoolchildren. Today, 93 percent of children eat three meals a day. And the More Food Program mitigates the impact of rising food prices and boosts family farm production.

Established in 1986, the World Food Prize recognizes individuals who have made breakthrough achievements

to improve the quality, quantity and availability of food throughout the world. It has been awarded to 30 people from all over the world working in areas such as plant breeding, soil science, early childhood nutrition, livestock health, famine relief and establishing government policies favorable to agricultural development.

Latest estimates show the world's population growing to 9 billion by 2050, and currently one in eight people are hungry, according to the World Food Prize Foundation.

More Research Builds Case for Global Warming, Rising Seas

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington — Research published June 20 finds a steady rise in the sea level on the U.S. Atlantic coast, a faster rise now than at any time in the last 2,000 years.

The scientific team publishing in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* included researchers from Yale University, the University of Pennsylvania, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and others, and was supported with funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF). Their findings represent the first continuous sea-level reconstruction for the past 2,000 years, comparing variations in global temperature to changes in sea level over the millennia, according to an NSF press release.

"It's especially valuable for anticipating the evolution of coastal systems," said Paul Cutler, the program director in NSF's Division of Earth Sciences, "in which more than half the world's population now lives."

The researchers found that sea level was relatively stable from 200 B.C. to A.D. 1000. The water started creeping higher in the 11th century and rose a half millimeter each year for 400 years. That was followed by another stable period of a few hundred years. In the 19th century, sea level began rising again and has been rising about 2 millimeters per year, the fastest pace in 2,200 years.

The scientific team calculated these alternating epochs of rising and steady sea levels by examining sediment cores extracted from coastal salt marshes in the state of North Carolina. Those sediments and the fossilized microorganisms within them were analyzed through radiocarbon testing and other techniques that allowed estimates of the samples' ages and changes in sea level over time.

"Sea-level rise is a potentially disastrous outcome of climate change," said Benjamin Horton of the University of Pennsylvania, "as rising temperatures melt land-based ice and warm ocean waters."

Another study released in June touches upon one of the key controversies surrounding global warming data: What's causing it? Human activities pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere? Or is it part of a natural cycle that the Earth undergoes through the millennia? Research by a scientist at the U.S. Geological Survey lessens the significance of one natural source cited by climate skeptics as a possible cause – volcanic emissions.

Human activities – anthropogenic causes, as scientists refer to them – are emitting much more greenhouse gases than volcanoes are. “Present-day volcanoes emit relatively modest amounts of CO₂,” writes Terrence Gerlach in an article in *Eos*, the publication of the American Geophysical Union.

The global output of volcanoes annually is estimated to range from 0.15 billion to 0.26 billion metric tons, or gigatons. Human-generated CO₂ emissions amount to 35 gigatons, reports Gerlach, which “clearly dwarf all estimates of the annual present-day global volcanic CO₂ emission rate.”

Analysis of human emissions has been subdivided to specific sources. Gerlach wrote that they can individually outpace what volcanoes may spew: Light-duty vehicles like cars and trucks spew 3 gigatons a year and cement production emits 1.4 gigatons per year.

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