

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

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Proclamation by President Obama for Thanksgiving Day 2011	1
Free People Create Economic Growth, President Obama Says	1
U.S. Highlights \$25 Billion in Trade Deals with Asia-Pacific	2
Secretary Clinton Pledges Support, Solidarity to Thai Flood Victims	2

Proclamation by President Obama for Thanksgiving Day 2011

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
November 16, 2011

THANKSGIVING DAY, 2011

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

One of our Nation's oldest and most cherished traditions, Thanksgiving Day brings us closer to our loved ones and invites us to reflect on the blessings that enrich our lives. The observance recalls the celebration of an autumn harvest centuries ago, when the Wampanoag tribe joined the Pilgrims at Plymouth Colony to share in the fruits of a bountiful season. The feast honored the Wampanoag for generously extending their knowledge of local game and agriculture to the Pilgrims, and today we renew our gratitude to all American Indians and Alaska Natives. We take this time to remember the ways that the First Americans have enriched our Nation's heritage, from their generosity centuries ago to the everyday contributions they make to all facets of American life. As we come together with friends, family, and neighbors to celebrate, let us set aside our daily concerns and give thanks for the providence bestowed upon us.

Though our traditions have evolved, the spirit of grace and humility at the heart of Thanksgiving has persisted through every chapter of our story. When President George Washington proclaimed our country's first Thanksgiving, he praised a generous and knowing God for shepherding our young Republic through its uncertain beginnings. Decades later, President Abraham Lincoln looked to the divine to protect those who had known the worst of civil war, and to restore the Nation "to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union."

In times of adversity and times of plenty, we have lifted our hearts by giving humble thanks for the blessings we have received and for those who bring meaning to our lives. Today, let us offer gratitude to our men and women in uniform for their many sacrifices, and keep in our thoughts the families who save an empty seat at the table for a loved one stationed in harm's way. And as members of our American family make do with less, let us rededicate ourselves to our friends and fellow citizens in need of a helping hand.

As we gather in our communities and in our homes, around the table or near the hearth, we give thanks to

each other and to God for the many kindnesses and comforts that grace our lives. Let us pause to recount the simple gifts that sustain us, and resolve to pay them forward in the year to come.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 24, 2011, as a National Day of Thanksgiving. I encourage the people of the United States to come together -- whether in our homes, places of worship, community centers, or any place of fellowship for friends and neighbors -- to give thanks for all we have received in the past year, to express appreciation to those whose lives enrich our own, and to share our bounty with others.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand eleven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-sixth.

BARACK OBAMA

Free People Create Economic Growth, President Obama Says

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — A country's greatest economic resource is the talent and entrepreneurial spirit of its people, President Obama says, and open and accountable governments that treat all of their citizens equally and with dignity are in a better position to enjoy economic growth that will benefit everyone in their society.

"History shows that, over the long run, democracy and economic growth go hand in hand. And prosperity without freedom is just another form of poverty," Obama said November 17 in a speech to the Australian Parliament in Canberra.

The United States, Australia and others who value universal freedoms are advancing the rights of women, minorities, indigenous cultures and all people because "when societies harness the potential of all their citizens, these societies are more successful, they are more prosperous and they are more just," he said.

Free markets have been "the greatest force the world has ever known for creating wealth and opportunity," he said, and both countries are working together to encourage transparent economies, free and fair trade, and an international economic system with clear rules that every nation follows.

Economic partnerships cannot be only about one nation

extracting another's resources, Obama said. "We understand that no long-term strategy for growth can be imposed from above."

Real prosperity that fosters innovation and is enduring "comes from unleashing our greatest economic resource, and that's the entrepreneurial spirit, the talents of our people," he said.

Economic growth needs to be environmentally sustainable and encourage clean energy and jobs that will help combat climate change, he said, acknowledging that "as countries with large carbon footprints, the United States and Australia have a special responsibility to lead."

But Obama also said fair economic growth includes the need to respect the rights of workers, allow fair business competition, and protect intellectual property and new technology, which are driving innovation, and economic growth should be "not just for the few, but for the many."

Balanced economic growth can allow everyone to prosper if countries with large surpluses will take action to boost demand at home, the president said. In addition, consumers need to be protected from abuse, and there needs to be a global commitment to end corruption.

Obama said systems such as fascism and communism, where one man or one committee rules over a whole country, have failed for the same reason: "They ignore the ultimate source of power and legitimacy – the will of the people."

Despite their ebbs and flows, the currents of history have decisively moved in a single direction, he said. "History is on the side of the free – free societies, free governments, free economies, free people. And the future belongs to those who stand firm for those ideals, in this region and around the world."

U.S. Highlights \$25 Billion in Trade Deals with Asia-Pacific

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington – As President Obama wraps up the last leg of his nine-day Asia-Pacific tour, the White House highlights a series of "high-value, historic" private trade deals in the region exceeding \$25 billion in value and supporting an estimated 127,000 jobs in the United States alone.

"These cross-border collaborations, both public and private, underpin the expanding strategic partnership between the U.S. and the Asia-Pacific, contributing to economic growth and development," the White House said in a statement November 17.

Obama has highlighted the Asia-Pacific region as a key market for U.S. exports due to the region's "tremendous economic growth and its large and growing middle class," the statement said. The recent deals, the statement added, will contribute significantly to Obama's goal of doubling U.S. exports by the end of 2014.

A deal by Boeing to sell 230 aircraft to Indonesia's Lion Air for \$21.7 billion will support an estimated 110,000 U.S. jobs, according to the White House. It said the deal is the largest commercial airplane agreement ever for the U.S.-based aircraft manufacturer, as well as one of the largest deals ever between the United States and Indonesia.

Obama is scheduled to join a signing ceremony for the agreement in Bali November 18. The announcement came as Obama arrived in Indonesia for the annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meetings and the East Asia Summit.

Ahead of his stop in Bali, Obama met with senior Australian leaders to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the U.S.-Australia alliance and hosted the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders' meeting in Hawaii November 12-13. The president is scheduled to return to Washington November 20.

Boeing also agreed to sell eight aircraft to Singapore Airlines for \$2.4 billion, a deal the White House says will support an estimated 11,000 U.S. jobs.

General Electric has announced a deal to sell 50 engines to Garuda Airlines of Indonesia for \$1.3 billion, accounting for an estimated 5,000 jobs across the United States.

Sikorsky Helicopters, a subsidiary of United Technologies, has said it will supply 12 helicopters to the Brunei Ministry of Defense, a deal valued at \$325 million and estimated to support more than 1,000 U.S. jobs. The White House said the agreement represents one of the largest defense procurements in Brunei's history.

The White House said the deals will generate jobs in every corner of the United States and across all major sectors, adding that the agreements involve some of the largest U.S. companies, but also a significant number of small and medium-sized businesses.

Secretary Clinton Pledges Support, Solidarity to Thai Flood Victims

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton visited an evacuation center for victims of floodwaters in Bangkok November 17, to demonstrate the U.S. government's concern and sympathy for the people of

Thailand, and pledged ongoing support as the country works to recover from the high waters, which have swamped cities, homes, factories and even the graceful temples that dot the landscape.

"I love Thailand and I love the Thai people, and I've been very distressed about these terrible floods, which are a historic, horrible event for your country," said Clinton in an interview with hosts of a television talk program. "I'm here to show not only solidarity and sympathy, but confidence and optimism," said Clinton.

Prior to the interview, Clinton visited a stadium that is acting as an evacuation center for people flooded out of their homes. Greeting them with the traditional Thai bow, she asked about their experiences in the floodwaters.

Afterward, she told the interviewer that floods seem to bring on more prolonged misery than other natural disasters.

"There's something about a flood, though, that is so hard because it takes so long," she said. "It's there for weeks, even months, before it drains. And that can take a toll on people's spirits. The few people I had a chance to talk to — they don't know when they're going to get to go home. One said maybe two weeks; one said maybe a month. That's hard."

The Thai government reports that high waters are beginning to recede in some areas of Bangkok, but some flood conditions likely will exist for several more weeks as heavy monsoon rains that fell on the northern part of the country continue to flow southward toward the Gulf of Thailand.

Floods began with greater than average monsoon rains in July, and the government now estimates that more than 560 people have been killed in floodwaters, more than half of them children.

In the midst of these difficulties, Clinton said that she hopes her visit might cast a ray of optimism about what can be achieved in the recovery to come. "And I hope that we can send a strong message that, as devastating as these historic floods have been, Thailand will come back even better. The resilience and the optimism of the Thai people will definitely win the day, and the United States will be your partner every step of the way."

The \$10 million assistance package the United States has pledged to Thailand will also include efforts of experts in antiquity restoration. The floodwaters have been indiscriminating, offering no veneration or respect for the many temples and religious icons that were inundated along with 22 of Thailand's 77 provinces.

Referring to some of the devastating flooding disasters that have beset areas of the United States in recent years, Clinton said many countries have come to realize that poor land-use planning can often worsen flood damage. "As you develop and you have more businesses and more factories and more homes, you take away land that used to be drainage land, wetlands. So we're having to do this around the world, and it's a big wake-up call for all of us."

The secretary of state left Thailand November 17 for Bali, Indonesia, to attend the Association of South East Asian Nations and East Asia Summit meeting, but the USS Lassen remained at port in Bangkok. The ship has dedicated a team to working with Thais to conduct damage assessments and help determine where the aid efforts should begin.

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