

American

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President Obama Cancels Military Exercise with Egypt in Wake of Violence

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 15 August 2013

Washington — President Obama says the United States is cancelling its biennial joint military exercise with Egypt, scheduled for September, in response to violence in the country between Egyptian security forces and the Muslim Brotherhood.

“While we want to sustain our relationship with Egypt, our traditional cooperation cannot continue as usual when civilians are being killed in the streets and rights are being rolled back,” Obama said August 15 in Chilmark, Massachusetts.

The president’s remarks came the day after hundreds were killed. He condemned the violence as well as the interim government’s decision to reinstitute emergency law.

Obama said the cycle of violence and escalation on both sides is feeding the country’s cycle of polarization and “needs to stop,” and that along with lifting the state of emergency, a national reconciliation process giving all parties a voice in Egypt’s future should begin.

“We call on the Egyptian authorities to respect the universal rights of the people. We call on those who are protesting to do so peacefully and condemn the attacks that we’ve seen by protesters, including on churches,” he said, adding that the rights of women and the country’s religious minorities should be respected.

“Commitments must be kept to pursue transparent reforms to the constitution and democratic elections of a parliament and a president. And pursuing that path will help Egypt meet the democratic aspirations of its people while attracting the investment, tourism and international support that can help it deliver opportunities to its citizens,” he said.

The United States wants to partner with the Egyptian people in their pursuit of a better future, but it is up to Egyptians themselves to determine what that future will be, he said.

“We appreciate the complexity of the situation. While Mohamed Morsy was elected president in a democratic election, his government was not inclusive and did not respect the views of all Egyptians,” he said.

But at the same time, “we don’t take sides with any particular party or political figure,” Obama said.

“I know it’s tempting inside of Egypt to blame the United

States or the West or some other outside actor for what’s gone wrong. We’ve been blamed by supporters of Morsy; we’ve been blamed by the other side as if we are supporters of Morsy. That kind of approach will do nothing to help Egyptians achieve the future that they deserve,” he said.

The United States wants to see Egyptians work together to succeed as a peaceful, democratic and prosperous country, and the president acknowledged that it will be difficult at times.

“There are going to be false starts. There will be difficult days. America’s democratic journey took us through some mighty struggles to perfect our union. From Asia to the Americas, we know that democratic transitions are measured not in months or even years, but sometimes in generations,” Obama said.

Secretary Kerry Emphasizes Shared Values Between Brazil, U.S.

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 14 August 2013

Washington — The strength in U.S.-Brazil relations remains in the shared values of the two nations, says U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry.

On his first visit to the country as secretary of state, Kerry said Brazil and the United States “share a remarkable and dynamic partnership” — one that should not be derailed by inevitable disagreements.

“I ask the people of Brazil,” Kerry said in Brasilia August 13, “to stay focused on the important realities of our relationship, the bilateral relations between our countries which continue to grow stronger and stronger.”

“We share democratic values and we share a commitment to diversity and we share a determination to improve opportunities for our people,” Kerry said. “And the U.S.-Brazil relationship has the opportunity to provide extraordinary positive global impact if we continue to work together on these kinds of issues, on the environment and science and technology and sustainable energy, nonproliferation, on access to education, on disaster management, and our strong trade ties, our strong investment ties, our energy cooperation, our sustainable development cooperation.”

“Every single day we work together to advance economic opportunity, human rights, environment protection, regional peace and security, democracy, as well as major global challenges in the Middle East and elsewhere,” Kerry said.

Kerry made his remarks after his meeting with Brazilian Foreign Minister Antonio de Aguiar Patriota at a

luncheon with Patriota at the Itamaraty Palace in Brasilia. In his remarks to the press, Patriota said the potential for the relationship is growing greater. Speaking through an interpreter, Patriota said U.S.-Brazil relations are "getting more mature." The United States, Patriota added, is the largest investor in Brazil and its second-largest trading partner.

Kerry also spoke of the strong people-to-people connection between the two countries. "Each year thousands of people travel between the United States and Brazil, forging new ties between our countries," Kerry said. According to State Department estimates, some 150,000 U.S. citizens visit Brazil annually. In 2011, more than 1.5 million Brazilians visited the United States.

While in Brasilia, Kerry met with representatives from Brazil's legislature, the heads of the foreign relations committees, representatives from civil society, Minister of Education Aloízio Mercadante and Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff.

President Obama Acknowledges "Emerging Differences" Between Russia, U.S.

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 12 August 2013

Washington — President Obama said that while the United States and Russia have made much progress and cooperated on many important issues during the past four years, there are "emerging differences" between the two nations, but still room for both to work together for the betterment of both their peoples.

Speaking at the White House August 9, Obama acknowledged that while he will be attending the Group of 20 (G20) Summit in St. Petersburg, Russia, September 5-6, he will not be meeting in a separate summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The move followed Russia's decision to grant asylum to Edward Snowden, an American citizen who has leaked classified U.S. government information, as well as differences between the two governments over the conflict in Syria and human rights issues, including recent Russian legislation penalizing gays and lesbians.

"Our decision to not participate in the summit was not simply around Mr. Snowden, it had to do with the fact that, frankly, on a whole range of issues where we think we can make some progress, Russia has not moved. And so we don't consider that strictly punitive," Obama said.

Over the past four years, "there's been a lot of good work that has been done and that is going to continue to be done," he said, citing the 2011 New START agreement that is reducing the nuclear stockpiles of both countries, as well as Russia's help in supplying international forces

in Afghanistan. He also cited the administration's work in 2012 to help Russia join the World Trade Organization.

At the same time, "there are just going to be some differences, and we're not going to be able to completely disguise them," he said.

The United States will be assessing "where the relationship can advance U.S. interests and increase peace and stability and prosperity around the world," Obama said.

"Where it can, we're going to keep on working with them; where we have differences, we're going to say so clearly," the president said.

He urged Russian leaders to resist framing issues as "a zero-sum game," where what is good for one country is bad for the other, and consider where they want to take Russia in the future.

"I think if they are looking forward into the 21st century and how they can advance their economy and make sure that some of our joint concerns around counterterrorism are managed effectively, then I think we can work together," he said.

Youth Are a Resource for Meeting Global Challenges

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 12 August 2013

Washington — With more than half the world's population under the age of 30, youth are often seen as a problem instead of an opportunity. "But that viewpoint needs to change," says Zeenat Rahman, special adviser on global youth issues to Secretary of State John Kerry.

"Youth are a key component to solving many of the world's most pressing global challenges. It can't and shouldn't be done without their voice and input," Rahman said. "It's important to highlight young people who are leading in their communities and who serve as role models for others."

In an interview leading up to International Youth Day — an annual U.N.-led celebration observed on August 12 — Rahman acknowledged that many of the world's young people face challenges, in areas such as accessing education and employment. "But they are also often the ones creating solutions," she said.

Young people are the drivers of innovation and economic growth, and act as positive change agents, Rahman said, but their potential needs to be cultivated. To that end, the State Department has a number of initiatives to foster progress in these areas:

- **Economic empowerment:** The State Department is

partnering with the private sector to conduct entrepreneurship training and networking in every region of the world and bringing this issue to the highest levels of government.

- **Political participation:** Young people are being included in multilateral meetings such as the International Labour Conference, the Community of Democracies Ministerial and the U.N. General Assembly. "Additionally," the special adviser commented, "we are providing youth the opportunity to join youth councils in our embassies and consulates, where they meet with leadership, including the ambassador, to discuss our policies, the challenges they face and possible solutions."

- **Skills training:** The State Department has placed significant emphasis on empowering youth and providing skills that match market demands. One example is TechGirls, which is focused on empowering 15- to 17-year-old girls in the Middle East and North Africa regions, including Tunisia. "The program emphasizes hands-on skills development in fields such as programming, robotics, mobile application building, Web design, video graphics and 3-D game design," Rahman said. "It is intended to help them break into the science and technology fields."

- **Education:** Malala Day – observed at the United Nations July 12 in honor of Malala Yousafzai, the 16-year-old Pakistani girl who was shot by Taliban terrorists for her outspoken support for girls' schooling – reinvigorated the international community. "But 57 million children are out of school and many more cannot afford higher education," Rahman said. "This has a direct impact on the employability of young people and the global economy." One way the State Department is addressing this issue is through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), a platform that provides open access to higher education courses online.

- **Engaging young leaders in Africa:** Africa is a continent of 1 billion people, and more than 60 percent are under age 35. "By 2050, one-quarter of the world's workforce will reside in Africa," Rahman said. "To remain competitive in the global marketplace, America needs to establish partnerships with African countries and Africa's rising young leaders who are helping to fuel the growth of these economies." To meet this need, President Obama in June launched the Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, which will give young people the opportunity to study at U.S. universities and intern in the United States in the summer of 2014. In addition, the Apps4Africa competition was launched in 2009 as an annual program that rewards social entrepreneurs using technology to solve societal problems.

President Obama Names Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipients

09 August 2013

Washington – A former U.S. president, a celebrated Latin jazz musician and a world-famous media mogul and philanthropist are among the 16 Presidential Medal of Freedom recipients announced by President Obama on August 8.

"The Presidential Medal of Freedom goes to men and women who have dedicated their own lives to enriching ours," Obama said in a White House news release.

"This year's honorees have been blessed with extraordinary talent, but what sets them apart is their gift for sharing that talent with the world. It will be my honor to present them with a token of our nation's gratitude," the president said.

Recipients in 2013 include former President Bill Clinton, Cuban-born jazz trumpeter Arturo Sandoval and broadcast journalist and philanthropist Oprah Winfrey.

The medal is the United States' highest civilian honor, presented to individuals who have made especially meritorious contributions to the security or national interests of the United States, to world peace, or to cultural or other significant public or private endeavors. The awards will be presented at the White House later in 2013.

The year 2013 also marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the award by President John F. Kennedy, as well as the first ceremony bestowing the honor on 31 recipients. Since then, more than 500 individuals have been honored with the medal.

The following individuals will receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom:

- **Ernie Banks** – One of the greatest baseball players of all time, he hit more than 500 home runs in his career and was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1977.

- **Ben Bradlee** – As executive editor of the Washington Post, he oversaw coverage of the Watergate scandal and successfully challenged the U.S. government over the right to publish the Pentagon Papers.

- **Bill Clinton** – After serving as the 42nd president of the United States, he established the Clinton Foundation to improve global health, strengthen economies, promote wellness and protect the environment and formed a fund with President George W. Bush in 2010 to help Haiti.

- **Daniel Inouye (posthumous)** – A decorated World

War II veteran, Senator Inouye was the first Japanese American to serve in Congress, representing the people of Hawaii from the moment it became a state.

- **Daniel Kahneman** – This pioneering scholar of psychology escaped Nazi-occupied France in World War II and later applied cognitive psychology to economic analysis, laying the foundation for a new field of research and earning the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 2002.

- **Richard Lugar** – Former Senator Lugar, who represented Indiana in the U.S. Senate for more than 30 years, is best known for his bipartisan leadership and decadeslong commitment to reducing the threat of nuclear weapons.

- **Loretta Lynn** – This country music legend, raised in rural Kentucky, emerged as one of the first successful female country music vocalists in the early 1960s, breaking barriers in an industry long dominated by men.

- **Mario Molina** – A visionary chemist and environmental scientist born in Mexico, he earned the Nobel Prize in chemistry for discovering how chlorofluorocarbons deplete the ozone layer.

- **Sally Ride (posthumous)** – The first American female astronaut to travel to space, she was a role model to generations of young women, advocating science education, racial and gender equality, and aspirations without limitation.

- **Bayard Rustin (posthumous)** – This unyielding activist for civil rights, dignity and equality served as an adviser to Martin Luther King Jr. and organized the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

- **Arturo Sandoval** – Born outside Havana, this trumpeter, pianist and composer became a protégé of jazz legend Dizzy Gillespie and is widely considered one of the greatest living jazz artists.

- **Dean Smith** – Head coach of the University of North Carolina basketball team for 36 years, he retired as the winningest men's college basketball coach in history, with 96 percent of his players graduating from college.

- **Gloria Steinem** – A renowned writer and activist for women's equality and civil rights, she was a leader in the women's liberation movement and co-founded Ms. magazine.

- **Cordy Tindell "C.T." Vivian** – This distinguished minister, author and organizer was a leader in the civil rights movement and a friend of Martin Luther King Jr.

- **Patricia Wald** – A pioneering woman in the field of law, she was one of the most respected appellate judges of her generation and later served on the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague.

- **Oprah Winfrey** – Best known for creating *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, which became the highest-rated television talk show in America for 25 years, she has long been active in philanthropic causes and expanding opportunities for young women.

Malaria Vaccine Shows Promise in U.S. Research

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 09 August 2013

Washington – U.S. government health researchers report some success in early human testing of a malaria vaccine. In a trial involving fewer than 60 patients, the vaccine cleared three important hurdles: it's safe for humans; it produces an immune response; and it offered malaria protection in adults.

Sanaria Inc., a biotechnology firm in Maryland, developed the vaccine in pursuit of its corporate mission devoted to cracking this scientific puzzle. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), with collaborators from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and the Naval Medical Research Center, evaluated the Sanaria product at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) near Washington.

Fifty-seven healthy adults consented to be in what is called a Phase 1 trial. Among the volunteers, 40 participants received the vaccine and 17 did not. Making sure a vaccine is safe is one of the key objectives in a trial at this stage, so after the volunteers were vaccinated intravenously, the researchers let a week pass to see if adverse reactions emerged, or if any signs of malaria were induced by the vaccine.

The trial vaccine is known as PfSPZ, after *Plasmodium falciparum*, the most deadly of the malaria-causing parasites. PfSPZ is made from live but weakened sporozoites, the offspring of the infective malaria spores. The NIAID volunteer patients showed no signs of the disease itself over that first week, and developed varying levels of antibodies against malaria, depending on the level of the PfSPZ dose they received.

Three weeks after volunteers received their final vaccination, the researchers let the malaria-carrying mosquitoes loose, and participants were bitten by the insects. Deliberate human malaria infection under controlled conditions is a standard process in malaria vaccine trials, according to the August 8 NIAID press release about the test.

Twelve of the participants who received the higher doses

of the vaccine did not get malaria. Three of the high-dose volunteers did come down with the disease, but that compares to infection among 16 of 17 participants in the low-dosage group.

Another 12 participants received no vaccine at all, and 11 of those volunteers came down with malaria.

"In this trial, we showed in principle that sporozoites can be developed into a malaria vaccine that confers high levels of protection and is made using the good manufacturing practices that are required for vaccine licensure," said Dr. Robert A. Seder, the principal investigator of the trial at the NIAID Vaccine Research Center.

The volunteers were all in the NIH Clinical Center as researchers waited for symptoms to appear. The participants remained there through diagnosis and treatment with anti-malarial drugs. They were all shown to be free of infection at the end of the trial.

Seder said the trial is a "promising first step in generating high-level protection against malaria." Future studies, he added, will attempt to find the best dosage, schedule and delivery method for PfSPZ. In the Phase 1 trial, patients got the vaccine intravenously, not a common route for vaccine. A vaccine that requires injection in a vein is more complex to administer, especially considering some of the rural and underdeveloped regions where malaria inflicts the greatest suffering.

"The global burden of malaria is extraordinary and unacceptable," said NIAID Director Dr. Anthony S. Fauci. "Scientists and health care providers have made significant gains in characterizing, treating and preventing malaria; however, a vaccine has remained an elusive goal. We are encouraged by this important step forward."

In 2010, some 219 million cases of malaria and an estimated 660,000 malaria-related deaths occurred globally, according to World Health Organization (WHO) statistics issued earlier this year. The majority of malaria deaths occur among African children, age 5 years and younger.

The NIAID vaccine trial is just one of many activities backed by the U.S. government to lessen the burden of this disease. The President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) works in 19 focus countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia's Greater Mekong subregion. For the last seven years, PMI has worked in concert with national governments; The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; the World Bank and other donors to reduce the occurrence of the disease, which research has shown contributes to a generational cycle of

poverty. WHO's 2012 World Malaria Report offered evidence of success in the anti-malarial campaign, with the estimated annual number of global deaths falling by more than one-third since 2000.

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