

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama Says Sanctions Against Zimbabwean Officials Will Continue.....	1
Remarks by Secretary Clinton at AMIDEAST Office in Ramallah	1
Statement of “P5+1” Group on Iran’s Nuclear Program	3
World War II Black Women’s Army Unit Receives Overdue Honors	3

President Obama Says Sanctions Against Zimbabwean Officials Will Continue

Cites actions by Robert Mugabe and others that undermine democracy

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama announced that United States sanctions against Zimbabwean leader Robert Mugabe and his key supporters will continue, citing an “unusual and extraordinary threat” to U.S. foreign policy.

Obama made the announcement March 4 in a written statement, informing Congress that economic sanctions originally declared in 2003 and expanded in 2005 and 2008 would continue in effect for one year beyond the previously set March 6 expiration date.

“The crisis constituted by the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions has not been resolved,” Obama said. “These actions and policies pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States.”

However, the Obama administration has said it is continuing its humanitarian assistance to help the people of Zimbabwe as they continue to suffer from food shortages, a deadly cholera outbreak and continued economic stagnation.

The U.S. Agency for International Development has provided more than \$264 million in food and health assistance to Zimbabwe since October 2007. The agency has also pledged \$6.8 million in emergency water, sanitation, hygiene and health assistance since the cholera epidemic broke out in August 2008.

In a statement released March 4 by White House press secretary Robert Gibbs, Obama said Mugabe and others who have been identified as “persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe” will continue to have their access to any assets or property in the United States blocked.

Their actions “have contributed to the deliberate breakdown in the rule of law in Zimbabwe, to politically motivated violence and intimidation, and to political and economic instability in the southern African region,” Obama said.

The United States is joined by the European Union in maintaining sanctions against Mugabe and his key supporters, which include some members of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party and other individuals and entities closely tied to Mugabe's regime.

Remarks by Secretary Clinton at AMIDEAST Office in Ramallah

Clinton pays tribute to Access English Language Program in Middle East

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
March 4, 2009

REMARKS

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
Remarks at AMIDEAST for
Access English Language Scholarship Program

AMIDEAST Office
Ramallah, West Bank

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much for joining me here at AMIDEAST, and I want to thank Steven Keller, who is the country director for the West Bank and Gaza, and Maha Hasan, the assistant country director, and Intisar Tawil, the program assistant for the Access program. I am pleased to be joined by my delegation, especially Senator Mitchell and Consul General Jake Walles.

I've just had the great privilege of meeting and talking with students taking part in the English Access program. The United States Government is proud to sponsor this program, and AMIDEAST does an excellent job managing it here. I want to commend all of the Access participants for being part of this, for really seizing this opportunity. There were 8,000 applicants and 1,000 were selected. So it's a real tribute to this program and to these young people, but it also demonstrates the extraordinary desire on the part of young people to learn more and expand their own opportunities.

I really want to thank Steven Keller and his teaching staff for illustrating, as I just saw, the extraordinary capacity of young Palestinians growing up in the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem. Too often, young men and women in this part of the world are not given the tools that they deserve to fulfill their own God-given potential and meet their own expectations for their lives.

When I walked into the classroom, they were beginning a lesson on Women's History Month and they were talking about Sally Ride, who is one of the people I most admire in our country. I told them that many years ago, I had the idea that I could be an astronaut – which obviously was never going to happen for a million reasons – but that a young woman named Sally Ride had that dream and kept working hard and achieved it.

The Access English Language Microscholarship Program is a real outreach to young people around the world by the United States and by the American people. There are 44,000 students in 55 programs around the world. Many of these students, who come from families that couldn't otherwise afford this kind of educational experience, are able to not only have English language training, but also artistic expression experiences, cultural enrichment, and other activities.

Now, this program has been laying an educational foundation for nearly 4,000 Palestinian students. But it should not be the final chapter in their learning. The students I met today and the others who are in these programs should be able to continue their educations. It is worth noting that historically, the Palestinian people have put a great premium on education. We know from our own country that Palestinian Americans are leaders in science and art and medicine and business and literature and academia. We hope to see the same opportunities flourishing right here.

It should be no surprise that educational programs are in great demand, and we have, as I said, far more applicants than can be accommodated. So today, I'm pleased to announce that our government will support new avenues of educational opportunity for Palestinian students who have the desire and dedication to further their studies.

First, we will provide new funding for the Youth Education and Study program, also known as YES, so more high school students can participate in American student exchange programs that will further the bonds between Palestinian and American young people. I know that there are people in this program teaching, including Steven Keller, who have had these kinds of opportunities and therefore become real advocates for what this means.

Second, I'm also proud to announce the creation of a new program that will enable Palestinian students to enroll in full four-year programs at eligible Palestinian universities. Today, these universities remain out of financial reach for too many of these young people. It's the same in our country. We have so many bright young people whose

families cannot afford to send them to college, and we're doing more in our own country and I want to do more right here with Palestinian students.

Third, we will make opportunity grants available for Palestinian students interested in studying at American universities so that a larger pool of capable young men and women from places like the West Bank and Gaza can compete along with students in other countries for the opportunity to further their academic training in America.

These efforts, along with the educational programs already in place, are vital to the larger goals outlined by President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad in Egypt earlier this week. Education is the undergirding of any prosperous and successful society. It will be essential to our shared efforts to work toward a two-state solution so that Palestinians will be able to live in their own state, with their own educational institutions, including their four-year universities, because of a comprehensive peace in the region.

For a Palestinian state to be prosperous, accountable to its people, and able to live up to its obligations in the international community, it has to have more people who can do the jobs required in the 21st century, and to take on the responsibilities of this new century. Based on what I saw in the classroom today, I think that is absolutely probable if we can provide the circumstances in which these young people can flourish.

I think that the promise and possibility of the Palestinian people are unlimited, and it is our commitment, the commitment of President Obama, his Administration, certainly myself, and our government that we will do whatever we can to help prepare the next generation of Palestinian leaders to take advantage of the opportunities that we will work toward achieving.

So again, I want to thank the students and their teachers and I want to thank the people of the United States who are sponsoring this program, and I think they would all be very, very proud if they could have been in that classroom with me today to see these remarkable young people and to hear their questions. And I look forward to hearing more progress reports about how well you all are doing.

Thank you very much.

Statement of “P5+1” Group on Iran’s Nuclear Program*Calls upon Iran to implement U.N. Security Council resolutions*

STATEMENT

IAEA BOARD OF GOVERNORS

March 2009 SESSION

Statement on behalf of China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

We thank the Director General for his report on the "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards and relevant provisions of UN Security Council Resolutions 1737, 1747, 1803, and 1835 in the Islamic Republic of Iran."

We reaffirm our unity of purpose and strong support for the Agency. We applaud the Secretariat for the professionalism and impartiality with which it has pursued its verification mission and reaffirm that the IAEA plays an essential role in establishing confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear program.

We call upon Iran to meet without delay the requirements of the IAEA Board of Governors and to implement the resolutions of the UN Security Council.

We note the serious concern expressed in the Director General’s report and in his introductory statement to this Board about the continued lack of progress in connection with remaining issues which give rise to concerns about possible military dimensions of Iran’s nuclear program. In this regard, we call on Iran to cooperate fully with the IAEA by providing the Agency such access and information that it requests to resolve these issues.

We further call upon Iran to implement and ratify promptly the Additional Protocol and to implement all measures required by the Agency in order to build confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear program.

We remain firmly committed to a comprehensive diplomatic solution, including through direct dialogue, and urge Iran to take this opportunity for engagement with us and thereby maximize opportunities for a negotiated way forward.

World War II Black Women’s Army Unit Receives Overdue Honors*Ceremony for all-black battalion held at U.S. women’s military memorial*

By Crystal Ofori
Staff Writer

Washington — In early 1945, 855 African-American women, members of the U.S. Women’s Army Corps (WAC), were sent to England and given the task of sorting through millions of undelivered cards, letters and packages destined for American troops serving in Europe.

The only unit of African Americans in the WAC to serve overseas during World War II, the all-black 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion worked first in Birmingham, England, and then in Rouen, France, handling the massive backlogs of mail piled from floor to ceiling in warehouses and airplane hangars. After their work was done, the women were discharged without any special recognition for what they had accomplished.

Now, almost 65 years later, three members of the 6888th — Mary Crawford Ragland, 81, Alyce Dixon, 101, and Gladys Carter, 87 — received a long-overdue thank you at a February 25 ceremony attended by military officials, soldiers, veterans, friends and family members. The event took place at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial, which is located on the grounds of Arlington National Cemetery near Washington.

These are “women of courage, women of fortitude, women of attitude and women of color,” said one speaker. Another noted that women of color currently serving in the military “stand on their shoulders.”

Ragland and Dixon also were present a week later when U.S. first lady Michelle Obama visited the memorial March 3 for a Women’s History Month event. “These women and thousands of others set a standard for excellence that enables women who serve today to take on even greater responsibilities,” Obama said, according to the White House.

During the February 25 ceremony, Colonel David Griffith, director of the U.S. Army Freedom Team Salute Commendation Program, which sponsored the event, noted that the 6888th consisted of women “who answered their nation’s call to service at a time where the society they had sworn to defend and protect did not recognize their right to full citizenship.” In 1945 segregation and racial discrimination still existed in many parts of the United States, voting rights for blacks were often challenged, and

the armed forces were still segregated.

Freedom Team Salute is a program that recognizes veterans as well as the families, employers, Army civilians and others who support U.S. Army soldiers.

THE 6888TH: GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

Led by Major Charity Adams Earley, the first African-American woman officer in the Women's Army Corps, the 6888th worked around the clock in three shifts to sort through the backlog of mail. Their task was important because mail was a significant morale booster for the troops on the front lines of the war – but it wasn't easy. The women had to deal with dim lighting, cold weather and poor heating, and as they pared down the piles of mail, more shipments were coming in.

There was also another problem with the mail: "A lot of them sent packages and some said 'Junior, U.S. Army' or 'Buster, U.S. Army,'" recalled Dixon, "but of course they had a [identification] tag number and we looked it up. But we couldn't look it up right away – we had to use the mail to find it" by digging for clues in letters and packages to help identify the soldiers. Another challenge was the mobility of the troops – soldiers often were on the way to another location by the time their mail caught up with them.

The 6888th finished their task at Birmingham by May 1945 and then moved on to Rouen to clear out another huge backlog of mail. They were given a six-month deadline but finished in half that time. The women wanted to prove their worth: "We wanted to prove that we were Americans citizens," Ragland said. "Our soldiers were going to war, we were their women, and we did it and we did it well."

At the ceremony, each woman received a personalized certificate of appreciation from Freedom Team Salute, a letter of appreciation signed by the Army chief of staff and the secretary of the Army, and a U.S. Army lapel pin and decal. The regional chairperson of the National Association of Black Military Women, Master Sergeant Shirley A. Smith, faced the three honorees and saluted them.

Ragland blew kisses as she received her certificate, Dixon smiled and giggled when her age was revealed, and Carter sang, did the army "Hooah!" shout and joked with the speakers, who referred to her as "energetic."

The honorees also thanked the people in attendance. Carter told the contemporary servicewomen, "Our pride is seeing you young women who are serving today and who have

served since us." At the reception, she referred to them as her "granddaughters," chatting and taking pictures with them.

Dixon said: "I thank God he let me live to be 101 [to be] at this ceremony. Thank you all!"

At the end, Ragland said: "When we returned to the United States after our duty abroad, we arrived and were sent home. No parade, no welcome, no nothing. But, thank you, Jesus, we've received it today!"

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