



Remarks on U.S.-Africa Policy

Gregory L. Garland, Chief, Press and Public Affairs, African Affairs
West & Central Africa Oil & Gas Conference
Houston, Texas
June 13, 2007

Honorable Ministers, fellow speakers, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

It is an honor to be here today. The fact that we are here today in Houston talking about West and Central Africa is evidence of Africa's growing importance for Americans, and I might add, Houston's importance for Africans.

Houston of course is the capital of the energy industry. It is only natural that Africans over the years have come here in growing numbers to learn the oil business, to go to school, and to live, giving you one of the largest African immigrant communities anywhere. It is only natural, too, that your links to Africa have multiplied -- in education, culture, business, politics, even tourism.

I was living in Angola when the first direct air service to the U.S. was established a few years ago. It wasn't to New York or Washington; it was to Houston. Since then, more than a few American officials based in Angola have returned home via Houston. That's a powerful symbol that needs no explanation.

Today, I will present an overview of U.S. policy in Africa, highlighting this administration's and this country's historic engagement with what many call the Mother Continent. It involves a new approach that focuses on partnership, a relationship of equals. I want you to leave here knowing that Africa now lies front and center of American foreign policy.

Ladies and gentlemen, you're probably wondering about this map behind me. Obviously, it's way out of date. But it's a map I'm certain that many of you have seen, some probably several times. Can anybody here tell me where this map is from? Yes, sir, you are correct. It's the opening shot in the great film classic, *Casablanca*...It's a shot that lasts two seconds.

Casablanca was produced in 1942, and won Best Picture, Best Screenplay, and Best Director. To this day, it consistently ranks #1 on American lists of favorite movies. It is embedded in our collective memory perhaps like no other film, and perhaps no other work of art.

Look at this map. It is Africa. *Casablanca*, the most influential movie ever made, is a movie set in Africa. But it is a movie set in an Africa without Africans. Instead, it's about an American who runs an American-themed bar, a Norwegian, a Czech, a Frenchman, and some Germans.

This, I submit, emblemized an American view of Africa that persisted all too long. In World War II, Africa was a strategic stepping stone to the places that mattered in Europe. In the Cold War, Africa was a sideshow to the struggle that mattered -- in Europe and East Asia. Even as we Americans set in place well-intentioned economic development policies, it was too often with the idea of doing good *for* Africa, rather than *with* Africa. Like *Casablanca*, Africa for too long was an exotic backdrop where Africans were sight unseen.

II. FOREIGN POLICY VISION

A. PRESIDENT BUSH

That has changed. At the beginning of his Administration in 2001, President Bush's foreign policy team decided not to rank U.S. interests according to the traditional hierarchy of regions. In that ranking, Europe was considered a vital national security interest, Asia and the Middle East important, and Latin America and Africa mainly of humanitarian interest. We no longer operate according to this hierarchy.

Instead, the Administration has implemented a strategy to pursue more effectively American national interests in a world where non-state actors, and illegal trans-border activity, can pose essential threats to even the most powerful of countries. September 11, 2001, brought this home to all of us.

Globally, the President has set his priorities as: (1) combating terrorism; (2) preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction; and (3) promoting democracy not as end in itself, but as the key to the rule of law, and thus prosperity.

B. TRANSFORMATIONAL DIPLOMACY

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has applied the President's vision to her strategy of transformational diplomacy. The goal is to develop a network of well-governed states capable through responsible sovereignty of protecting themselves and contributing to regional security. By so doing, they also protect the international system.

She has described her approach as "doing things with people, not for them." Note the key prepositions: with, not for. In a word, this means partnership. This vision supports African leadership as strategic partners and seeks to build up Africa's institutional capacity. In other words, doing things with Africans, not for them.

We believe this vision dovetails with Africa's own growing emphasis on the values of freedom, the rule of law, and collective security, as embedded in the African Union's New Partnership for African Development. The NEPAD Peer Review mechanism reinforces African leaders' own efforts to promote democracy and good governance among their peers.

The U.S. understands that there are new, rising strategic powers around the world, including Sub-Saharan Africa. Nations such as South Africa and Nigeria that have used their diplomatic, economic, and military power to shape the continent for the better. Mali, Mozambique, Liberia, Botswana, Benin and many other African countries are leading the way as examples of the power of democratic rule of law.

U.S. Africa policy seeks to nurture relationships with such strong, capable, and well-governed Africa partners.

III. REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Nothing has been more important than ending conflict in Africa. We are pursuing that goal by backing African conflict mediation and strengthening Africa's capacity to carry out peace support operations and to fight terror.

To do so, we work directly with lead Africa mediators and multilaterally with the United Nations, African Union, and sub-regional organizations like ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States. In the Gulf of Guinea, we are working directly with governments on maritime security, an issue that needs no explanation to

you here today.

There's plenty of evidence that this approach works. We've had success working with African partners in ending wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo, Burundi, and Sudan North-South conflict. The jury is still out on Darfur, which continues to shame us all for the collective failure to stop the killing. In Somalia, Africa has an opportunity to turn a failed state into a functioning one. The African Union has taken the lead there and in Darfur, with United Nations and American backing.

IV. INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Still, it is not enough just to end conflicts. We must invest in people, in Africans themselves. The place to start is health: the terrible killing machines of AIDS and malaria. And the place to start is partnership with ministries of health, working with African leaders in their effort to battle disease.

A. PEPFAR

Three weeks ago, President Bush announced that he would ask Congress to double its commitment to fight HIV/AIDS. If Congress approves, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) will be a ten-year, 30 billion dollar, multifaceted approach to combating this horrific disease. Twelve of the fifteen focus countries are in Africa. It represents the largest commitment ever by a single nation toward an international health initiative.

B. PMI -- MALARIA

We have seen the face of AIDS here in America, so we understand some of what Africa suffers. For too long, however, the West has turned a blind eye to malaria, which no longer exists in the developed world but is the #1 killer of Africans. We have begun to right that wrong.

In 2005, President Bush announced a 1.5 billion dollar initiative to fight this disease in fifteen African countries. This includes insecticide treated bed nets, indoor spraying, and life-saving anti-malaria medications.

To take one case, Angola, this initiative helped increase the number of children protected by nets from less than 5 percent to nearly 70 percent. In the first year this initiative expanded malaria protection to more than six million Africans. This year -- the second year -- we expect the total to reach 30 million people.

C. TRADE

It has become a truism that trade is the best aid. Creating the basis for a healthy, open trading relationship with Africa is a key objective.

• 1. AGOA

Many of you here are already familiar with AGOA - the African Growth and Opportunity Act. AGOA actually started as a Clinton Administration initiative. It is the cornerstone of our trade and investment policy with sub-Saharan African countries.

It was and is a great idea that has worked.

AGOA is designed on purpose to benefit responsive and responsible partners in Africa. This is why eligibility for participation in AGOA requires a commitment to: economic openness, transparent and democratic government, human rights, and poverty reduction. Every year the President reviews AGOA beneficiaries with these criteria in mind. We are pleased that in 2007, Liberia joined the 37 other AGOA-eligible countries.

AGOA has brought increased trade flows and new industry to Africa. Thanks in part to AGOA, two-way trade between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa has risen substantially, rising to a new high of over \$71 billion last year.

• 2. MCC

I said that it is crucial to support Africa's quest for building accountable democratic institutions. To succeed in the global economy, nations need fair and transparent legal systems; free markets that unleash the creativity of their citizens; banking systems that serve people at all income levels; and a business climate that welcomes foreign investment and supports local entrepreneurs.

We're doing this through a new program, the Millennium Challenge Account. This program works in countries that have already demonstrated commitment to fight corruption, implement democratic reforms, invest in health and education, and promote economic freedom. African governments -- not Americans -- must come up with ideas, a change in our way of doing development.

Once again, we seek a partnership of equals, Americans and African, where Africans take ownership and responsibility. That may seem like a tall order, but the fact is that right now five African nations have compacts in place worth nearly 1.5 billion dollars: **Ghana, Benin, Cape Verde, Mali, and Madagascar. 14 others are waiting in line.**

CONCLUSION

Ladies and gentlemen, what I've just described really is a reversal of our government's historical tendency to marginalize this, the Mother Continent. And I suggested earlier that it is more than simply a matter of policy. It is part of a much larger and exciting story of engagement by Americans with Africa and Africans.

That engagement is happening for several reasons:

- (1) Growing trade links with Africa, as I've shown, starting with oil, but thanks to AGOA and other program, extending to minerals, clothing, services, and tourism
- (2) It is happening because of television: African images are beamed to our living rooms every day, images usually but not always of disaster. Oprah Winfrey, George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, Mia Farrow, Drew Barrymore, and of course Bono, have used their celebrity status to make the world pay attention to Africa.
- (3) Because of a remarkable series of commercially-successful films - like *Blood Diamond* and *Hotel Rwanda*. They depict a vibrant, vital face of Africa even in the midst of tragedy, films that are made in Africa, use African actors, and that make all of us want to know more about and even visit the continent.
- (4) It is happening because of a two-way street of cultural exchange and migration, of which Houston is a major player: the migration of Africans to America to study and live new lives, and Americans who have gone to Africa as Peace Corps volunteers, teachers, students, missionaries, NGO workers.
- (5) Finally, is happening, too, because, at long last Americans are beginning to understand that Africa is part of who we are as a people, and has been since four Angolan bondsmen in chains walked off a ship in Jamestown, Virginia, nearly four centuries ago.

Let me close by returning to *Casablanca*, if I may. There's a famous scene at the end where French Inspector Renault offers to send Rick to Brazzaville. Rick agrees with the unforgettable words, "I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship." He goes to Brazzaville because that's where the Free French forces are, deep in the heart of what was French Equatorial Africa. Their goal is not to stay in Central Africa, however. Their intention is to fight for France and end up in Paris. Africa is just a prop.

You, my friends, know better than most, that Africa is no longer the prop; that Brazzaville nowadays is the stepping stone to Pointe Noire, within shouting distance of Cabinda, Equatorial Guinea, Luanda, Sao Tome, Gabon, and of course modern Kinshasa across the Congo River. When you go to Brazzaville in 2007, it is to work with Africans as partners, some of whom are here today.

In this spirit, I say to you that the U.S. has placed Africa front and center where it belongs, and where it will stay. I'll be happy to take any questions you might have.

Thank you.

Released on June 19, 2007

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.