



## Remarks to the Press in Nigeria

**John D. Negroponte, Deputy Secretary of State**

Abuja, Nigeria

November 13, 2007

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, good morning and thank you for coming today. I have a brief statement to make and then I will take your questions.

Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer and I have had a very fruitful and productive visit to Nigeria. Our visit is part of a larger trip to West Africa, with stops in Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Mali, where I will lead the U.S. delegation to the Community of Democracies to highlight the United States' commitment to promoting democracy, good governance, and partnership with nations that share common values.

Yesterday we met with President Yar'Adua and other senior officials, including Foreign Minister Maduekwe, National Security Advisor Mukhtar, Defense Minister Ahmed with Chief of Defense Azazi, and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Executive Chairman Ribadu. We also met with representatives of the business community and civil society. We appreciate the warm welcome we have received from everyone we have met, including you and your colleagues in the media.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is an important friend and strategic partner of the United States, as well as a leader on the Continent. The United States is committed to sustaining a robust bilateral partnership with Nigeria which advances our mutual interests. We welcome Nigeria's leadership role in Africa.

In my meetings, I reaffirmed to President Yar'Adua and Foreign Minister Maduekwe our support for reform, increased transparency, and principles of good governance. We applaud President Yar'Adua's commitment to strengthening the rule of law and to fighting corruption. We encourage his government to pursue vigorously electoral reform to correct the flaws revealed in last April's polls.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission is playing a key role in promoting good governance and democracy in Nigeria by pursuing corruption wherever it is found. Transparency is one of the most powerful tools available to fight corruption. In my meeting with EFCC Executive Chairman Ribadu, we discussed the challenges facing the EFCC.

We discussed with National Security Advisor Mukhtar the government's efforts to address longstanding issues in the Niger Delta. We support Nigeria's efforts to stabilize and improve governance in the Niger Delta. I assured both the National Security Advisor and the Defense Minister that the United States would do what it could to help Nigeria stamp out criminality in the Niger basin.

We were saddened by the death of the seven Nigerian peacekeepers in Darfur earlier this year. I reaffirmed to Defense Minister Ahmed and Chief of Defense Azazi our appreciation for Nigeria's continuing commitment to peacekeeping in that troubled country. We agreed on the need to deploy peacekeeping forces to Sudan as soon as possible. We also discussed how Nigeria can contribute to the African Union's peacekeeping efforts in Somalia.

Finally, I had open and engaging exchanges with Nigerian business leaders and with leading members of Nigeria's civil society. These communities make important contributions to Nigeria's economic and social development.

I now have a few minutes before we depart to take your questions. Thank you very much.

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