



Special Briefing
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Briefing By Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer on Secretary Rice's Upcoming Travel to Ethiopia

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MR. CASEY: Okay. Well, good afternoon. We wanted to make sure we sent you off on the weekend with at least one other opportunity to talk with people here today. So as you all know, the Secretary is going to be traveling next week, of course, to Ethiopia and then to Brussels. In Ethiopia, she's going to have an opportunity to work on a variety of issues including things related to the Great Lakes region as well as discussions about Sudan, Somalia, and a couple of other issues here.

We wanted to give our Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer an opportunity to talk with you a little bit about the trip, about some of the issues that the Secretary will be working on while she's out there, as well as take any questions you might have on other issues related to the region. So Jendayi, I'm going to turn the podium over to you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: Thank you very much. The Secretary will travel to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, arriving Wednesday, December 5th. She is going to hold a Great Lakes summit, essentially a meeting of the Tripartite plus heads of states and ministers, foreign ministers and defense ministers from Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Congo.

The Tripartite Plus group was established by the United States to facilitate dialogue and build confidence among the four countries in the Great Lakes region. This meeting is expected to further develop strategies and common security mechanisms to address what are known as the negative forces in the Congo, groups like the FDLR, the former Rwandan genocidaires, the Lord's Resistance Army and other groups in the Congo.

The meeting will also foster dialogue between the governments and seek common efforts to eliminate gender-based violence. We expect it to be attended at the head of state level, from the officials of the four countries as well as observers being invited from the United Nations, AU Chairman Konare, and the Great Lakes envoy for the EU.

She will also hold a Somali ministerial with regional countries and, again, attended by the AU Chairman Konare, the UN Special Rep for the Secretary General Ould-Abdallah. The Somalia ministerial will also have present President Yusuf and the new Prime Minister of Somalia, Nur Ade, attending the meeting. The goal is to consult and further coordinate a regional response to the crisis in Somalia. We're hoping that the consultation will focus on how to achieve a more inclusive political dialogue and reconciliation to move the country towards 2009 elections, how to mitigate the impact of the current violence, especially in Mogadishu on the civilian population and address the humanitarian emergency, working together to further isolate extremists and spoilers who continue to use violence, and then to push for quicker deployment of the African Union force into Somalia, the AMISOM force.

The countries attending the meeting, the ministerial, will be the Somali president, prime minister, Uganda, Djibouti, Ethiopia. We hope Kenya will be there. Kenya is in the midst of an election campaign, a very close election campaign. But also, the AU Chairman Konare will attend and the UN Special Rep to the Secretary General Ould-Abdallah.

The Secretary will also hold a ministerial meeting on Sudan to continue the U.S. focus on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement implementation. It will be held with the regional countries, particularly those who are members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, IGAD. These are the countries that were, in a sense, semi-guarantors of the CPA, having helped to negotiate it under Kenya's leadership. And so we want to consult on how to move the process forward or to get the CPA back on track.

The expected participants from these IGAD countries, ministers will be from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Uganda, we hope Kenya, as well as Sudan, the AU, Chairman Kanare and the UN Special Rep to the Secretary General Qazi.

In addition to the head of state summit on the Great Lakes, the Sudan ministerial and the Somalia ministerial, the Secretary of course will hold bilateral meetings with the Ethiopian Government, including a meeting and dinner with Prime Minister Meles and Foreign Minister Seyoum, in which we would expect a discussion to focus on regional stability, fighting terrorism, democracy promotion, economic development and food security in Ethiopia, including issues of the Ogaden and, of course, the robust program that the United States and Ethiopia are partnering on dealing with HIV and AIDS, TB and Malaria.

The bottom line is that the Secretary has been very much focused on the Great Lakes, Sudan and Somalia, and she wants to now to go Africa, go to Addis Ababa, in order to have the regional consultations because in all of these cases we've found that the key to the conflict prevention and promotion is to work with the regional countries themselves and their leadership. And so she has been involved on all of these issues, doing phone calls, meeting with these leaders here in Washington, and now she's going to go to the region to have an opportunity to bring them together once again so that we can try to promote conflict resolution.

And with that, I will answer any questions that you may have.

QUESTION: Can I ask you about a subject that you didn't mention, which I think is very likely to come up, and that's Ethiopia-Eritrea. As you know, today the Boundary Commission's mandate expired with no demarcation on the ground and tensions high despite what Meles and others seem to be saying, things are just as fragile as they were when perhaps when the war ended. How much is that going to be a part of the agenda? And also, how much of just plain Eritrean -- the Eritrea issue on its own, the state sponsor designation, how much is that going to play into her (inaudible)?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: I would imagine that, obviously, in her consultations with Prime Minister Meles and Foreign Minister Seyoum, one of their biggest challenges is dealing with the Boundary Commission, so I would imagine that that would be a topic of discussion bilaterally between the Secretary and the leaders of Ethiopia.

As far as Eritrea's role in the region, it would probably be more of a discussion on the Somalia -- during the Somalia ministerial. And it'll be a key one because we do need to deal with how to bring legitimate opposition into dialogue with the Transitional Federal Government, and when we say legitimate opposition, that's the need to try to isolate those who continue to call for attacks, for instance, against the peacekeeping forces, those who will continue to use violence as a tactic of dissent and a tactic of destabilization. And obviously, Eritrea has played a role in training, financing and providing some safe haven for groups that are more extremist, but also groups that are what I would say legitimate opposition groups, "the full parliamentarians." Some of them also sit in Eritrea. And so yes, Eritrea certainly will feature prominently on the

agenda in the Somalia ministerial.

QUESTION: Can I just ask one more very briefly on the Boundary Commission thing? Former Ambassador Bolton has written in his book that you in February of 2006 told him that you wanted to reopen the Boundary Commission's 2002 decision and to give the area or parts of the area around (inaudible), to award that which had been already granted to Eritrea to Ethiopia. Is that correct?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: No. Thank you for asking the question. I actually haven't read the book, so I am surprised that I even feature in it. But I can assure you unequivocally that I've never advocated for reopening the boundary decision, the EEBC decision on the -- you know, the land, the delimitation line. In fact, we've been very clear that we accept the delimitation line. The issue was how do you move from delimitation to demarcation. And I've always advocated that that has to involve dialogue between the countries because, clearly, territory that was Eritrea's has been given to Ethiopia, territory that's Ethiopian has been given to Eritrea. That's what drawing straight lines typically does. And so not to reopen the decision, but rather to have a dialogue about the demarcation, including options of open borders so that the people on the borders can move back and forth. And that really is, I think, just a matter of how do you implement the decision, not reopening or questioning decisions. So I could say without -- unequivocally that I've never advocated for changing the delimitation decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission.

QUESTION: You talked a little bit about the choreography for the various meetings and for the summit and the ministerials. Can you give me -- us a sense of the achievable, particularly when you're talking about the ministerial on Sudan and indeed the summit on the Great Lakes? These are enormously perennial issues. The Secretary is there for a limited period of time, a very short period of time. Can you give a sense of what concrete you expect to get out of these meetings?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: Sure. Thank you very much. Well, first, I would say that this is a continuation of her engagement and so it's not a one time engagement. For instance, the Tripartite Plus on the Great Lakes, we already have a mechanism in place for sharing information between the countries. We have what we call a fusion cell that sits in the Congo. One of the outcomes of this meeting will hopefully be to further empower that fusion cell, perhaps get more resources for it, increase the representation there, clarify whether the type of information that's being shared is sufficient. Is it reaching the -- is it moving out of the fusion cell to the ministers of foreign affairs and defense affairs?

And so we're trying to strengthen and build security mechanisms that are already in place, both through the Tripartite Plus but also the Great Lakes conference has developed regional security mechanisms. There was recently a deal reached or an agreement largely brokered by the UN between Rwanda and Congo called the Nairobi agreement, and so we would want to take that agreement and also further flesh it out, get the commitments of all the regional players and see how we can support them having a collective effort towards dealing with these negative forces in the Congo. And so that's on that one. It's a continuation of a process and we're trying to further institutionalize common mechanisms and also continue to build confidence because, quite clearly, there's a sense in the region that there needs to be a lot of assistance to the Congolese to address rebels coming from other countries that are, you know, operating. So LRA, the Lord's Resistance Army, is another one.

And there's a lot of good work that's going on very quietly, especially by the United Nations trying to help with demobilizing, trying to help with picking up some of the rebels who are actually defecting from some of these negative forces. So that's really the purpose there.

On Somalia, I think that the key here is to try to provide support to the new prime minister of Somalia. This is a real opportunity for the Transitional Federal Government to retool, to, in the person of the new prime minister, try to build greater confidence, greater credibility, and to further reach out to the legitimate opposition. And again, legitimate just means nonviolent opposition. And so I think that it's -- that the timing is particularly important because it's a time for all of the regional ministers to talk to the president and the prime minister to say what our expectations are of the Transitional Federal Government and also, for the Transitional Federal Government to speak to us to say what their needs are in terms of assistance.

At the same time, we've had trouble getting the African Union forces up and running, the AMISOM forces. We have the Ugandans there. We're hoping that the Burundians will come. But with the Secretary's engagement, we hope to further mobilize the AMISOM force and build support for it. It's also an opportunity for us to reflect on the Secretary General's recent report on Somalia in which he said that there should be some type of multinational force or coalition of willing forces because the conditions are not ripe for a UN force. That's a new position and I think that we, the United States, the Transitional Federal Government, and the regional countries most affected by the crisis in Somalia need to come together to figure out, how do we move forward from there.

QUESTION: And just to follow up on Somalia, I mean, what is your assessment of almost a year from the U.S.-backed Ethiopian intervention there? People say the -- Mogadishu is increasingly depopulated, the violence has intensified, the Ethiopians are largely stranded. As you said, the Ugandans are alone in the AU. It's a terrible outcome so far, isn't it, for an operation that the U.S. backed?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: No, the U.S. didn't back -- I don't know which operation you're saying the U.S. backed, but it's not a terrible outcome in the sense that this is more of the same in Somalia, in which we haven't had a government city since 1991 and Mogadishu has been a very violent place.

Yes, the violence is -- has intensified with the extremists and the insurgents using tactics to shoot and kill civilians and the government and the Ethiopian forces shooting back and sometimes, obviously, in a circumstance like that, the civilians are the ones who pay the highest cost, which is why, in this meeting of the ministerial, the Secretary also wants to put an emphasis on how we can, as I said, reduce the impact, the negative impact on civilians and increase our humanitarian emergency response to try to help protect those civilians.

So yes, we have a responsibility to try to support the civilian population, but the key here is a process of political dialogue and reconciliation, which is what we always supported even a year -- you know, more than a year since June of 2006, we've been calling for dialogue and reconciliation. So we've not been pursuing or seeking a military outcome, but rather, a political outcome.

Yes.

QUESTION: On the various negative forces back in the Great Lakes, there are various ideas and proposals --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: Yes.

QUESTION: -- dealing with Nkunda group or the FDLR. Where does the U.S. come down on these? For example, do you support a military offensive by the Kabila army to disarm Nkunda's people or are you --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: Well, we will --

QUESTION: -- (inaudible) your ideas?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: Well, there's two things. Well, there's no one single solution. Let's be very clear. There has to be a local process of reconciliation among the community there. Certainly, there needs -- we have asked President Kabila to act with restraint, to try to end the crisis with Nkunda through dialogue, not a direct dialogue but through offering asylum for Nkunda to leave and his forces to go into brassage or to demobilize, as the case may be.

So you know, there is more than one solution. Clearly, as a sovereign government, President Kabila has the right to try to exercise territorial sovereignty; i.e., that he should be able to provide security throughout his territory and has the right to use his forces against what is essentially a rebellious, you know, general from his military. And so, obviously, that's also there. But our concern is that the civilian population not be caught in the middle of such an offensive against Nkunda, and so we've been

urging Nkunda, the government of Kabila, to try to end this through peaceful means. And I think the best way is for Nkunda to go into exile. Actually, he hasn't been willing to do that up to this point, but so it may be necessary for President Kabila to bring greater pressure on him, including military pressure. But that's a problem for the civilian population. So I guess what I'm saying is that we continue to ask and seek restraint and that this end through negotiation.

QUESTION: Have you been in direct contact with Nkunda?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: Yes, yes. We're not in -- the United States is not in direct contact, but my special envoy Tim Shortley has spoken to Nkunda. Nkunda has called him several times and we've clearly conveyed the message to him that he should surrender, go into exile and allow his forces to go into brassage or to be demobilized by MONUC.

Yes.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, I was shocked yesterday when VOA dispatch disclosed that (inaudible) that 80 percent of the African Americans in Washington, D.C., are HIV-positive. I am wondering to which extent Secretary Condoleezza Rice is going to address the HIV/AIDS with Africans, as you said earlier.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: Well, I would imagine that it would come up most directly in her discussions with Prime Minister Meles bilaterally in Ethiopia because we will deal with the full range of our issues and Ethiopia is a major recipient of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. It's one of the top recipients of that program, and so I would imagine that there will be discussion about HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia. I don't anticipate it being a point of conversation on -- in the ministerials, but it may come up as well in the Great Lakes, especially given the gender-based violence that's taken place in Eastern Congo.

QUESTION: A follow-up. Along with the relief program, as you said, she's going to discuss, I would like to know about her efforts for a cure since your Global Coordinator on HIV/AIDS, Ambassador Mark Dybul, told us here on November 1st that we have to eliminate the word "cure" from our vocabulary and to replace it with the word "treatment." I am wondering, Madame Secretary, are you planning to brief the Africans about your efforts to find a cure for this deadly disease?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: I don't imagine that that will be a subject of Secretary Rice's conversation during her meetings in Addis on a cure versus a treatment. Certainly, we have pursued a strategy to provide treatment to keep people alive, to prolong their life through the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. But I think the AIDS Coordinator Mark Dybul is the expert and best placed to have that conversation with African countries on what we're doing also on a cure.

QUESTION: Rodney Livingston, SPNN.NET Television here in Washington, D.C. Have the countries of the -- that are involved in the trip, have they expressed a request or made requests of their specific goals that they might be looking for?

The second question: And what might be the indicators that the American people can look at, not predicting what the trip's going to be, but at its conclusion those indicators they can look at to determine the success?

And then the President's going to travel there, and any remarks you might have on that.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: I can say I have no remarks on the last question on the President's travel. I think you should -- you have to get that from the White House.

I think that the indicators of success are difficult to measure, are very difficult to measure. And I say that in the sense that this is not a one time engagement. This is a continuous engagement. Indicators of success, for instance, on the Great Lakes region would be that Secretary Rice and President Bush work together to bring President Kabila and President Kagame together in one of their first meetings when Rwandan forces were still very active in Eastern Congo. And so we have helped to strengthen and increase the coordination, the dialogue between these regional countries which had once been at war with each other. We moved from there to helping the -- Kabila have a legitimate government through an election process and now, what we're faced with is the last part of stabilizing that region and we see that as these negative forces.

And so we're trying to work with all the parties necessary, most importantly the regional countries themselves, but also the United Nations, which have major forces on the ground with MONUC. And so it's -- this meeting of -- I want to lower your expectations that this meeting will result in, you know, the end of Nkunda and FDLR all leaving. That's not going to happen. That's going to be a continual process, but what the meeting will do, we hope, is to provide a common approach, help build the capacity of the Congolese to address these negative forces in their country, support coordination of the three countries together or the four countries together in dealing with these forces which could potentially -- if, for instance, there's an offensive from -- if there is an offensive from Congo, those forces could go back into Rwanda, where they need to coordinate on how they deal with the FDLR and at the same time, build the confidence that they are taking a common approach and working with -- working not only closely together, but working effectively together.

QUESTION: Yes. Secretary, in the past, you've mentioned that the Burundian forces would be deployed to Somalia and now, I just heard you -- you were saying you're trying to build support. You know, I mean, what's going on over there as far as the -- you know, the situation on the ground in reference to the deployments?

The other question I have for you is, in a recent interview on Al-Jazeera, the President of Ethiopia, Mr. Zenawi, denied completely that there is no evidence that there was a quagmire going on in Somalia. I mean, what do you make of that?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: Well, I think that on the first question about the Burundian forces, we've been training the Burundian forces for more than a few months now and we expect them to deploy at any time. In fact, I think their deployment is imminent, in that they have a few soldiers in Somalia now doing the necessary reconnaissance to bringing in the rest of their forces. And so we hope that we're close with the Burundians. We're also working very closely with other countries, Ghana and Nigeria, which have said that they will also deploy forces.

So the United States continues to be a major supporter in terms of training, financing, and providing logistical lift for any forces that are willing to step up. Now we can't do it alone. We cannot shoulder the burden alone. And so we need to look at how we can have a more -- a less ad hoc mechanism for financing these forces and equipping them. The United States simply can't do it alone. The Brits have also been helping and also training, but we need others to do so. And I would say that if the United Nations can't deploy a force, it may be able to help pick up the financing of the AMISOM force as much as it's -- like it's done with the AMIS forces.

On the issue of a quagmire in Somalia, what we clearly see is that there is continual and growing violence and there hasn't been the expected deployment of the AMISOM to allow the Ethiopians to leave. That has been what the international community has impressed upon Ethiopia, that they couldn't simply leave; they had -- which would leave a vacuum -- they needed to leave as part of the deployment in -- of the AMISOM forces.

So I don't know that there is a quagmire. I couldn't say that there is a quagmire as such, because a quagmire suggests that you can't get out. But I do think that we need to put a greater emphasis on getting the AMISOM troops in.

Yes.

QUESTION: Some of the countries you are going to talk to in Addis Ababa, including Ethiopia, are those who openly rejected your effort to set up AFRICOM inside Africa. Is the Secretary likely to persuade them to reconsider?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: Well, I'm not sure of any that openly rejected AFRICOM, including Ethiopia, because they never were asked to host AFRICOM. I don't think we've made any formal request from any country at this point to host AFRICOM. There are some who have offered to host and only one that I know of that has clearly said that they think that there shouldn't be an AFRICOM on the continent, that being Libya. So I think it's inaccurate. You know, maybe it's accurate, but I haven't heard any of the countries that I mentioned that she's going to meet with in Addis come out publicly or even privately say that they would not be a host to AFRICOM. But we also have not asked any one of those countries to host AFRICOM.

MR. CASEY: I think we have time for just one or two more in here. Matt, why don't you go and then we'll get Charlie.

QUESTION: This is two extremely brief ones. One, is Darfur going to be -- come up at all on the Sudan or is this simply North-South? And who do you expect to show up? Do you expect Bashir and Salva Kiir to show up, or is it going to be a lower level on that one? And I've got one more, but it's equally brief.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: On Sudan, we expect it to focus on CPA. Of course, there's a relationship between CPA and Darfur, but we expect the focus to be on CPA.

And as for the Government of National Unity or the Sudanese participation, it's still very fluid. I'm not sure. We certainly -- it's a ministerial so we certainly would hope for a minister. But it may be Salva Kiir may come himself, but I'm not really sure. We certainly don't expect President Bashir to attend.

QUESTION: And my last one is just on the negative forces in the LRA and what -- you know, there's all sorts of rumors out there about the situation with Vincent Otti and, in fact, the entire Juba peace process. What is it that's your understanding of what's going on with him personally? Is he alive or dead? What's going on with (inaudible) and what's going on with the actual process?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: Well, we can't confirm that Otti is dead, but the evidence is pointing in that direction. He hasn't been heard of for quite a while, so it looks like he's dead.

QUESTION: You don't buy the cholera explanation?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: No, we don't buy the cholera explanation. It looks like he's dead, but we couldn't confirm that ourselves. There are increasing defections from Garamba Park and I think that that's positive. We continue to support the Juba peace process and I think it's critically important especially for bringing reconciliation to Northern Uganda. And so we're watching it very closely. We are very involved, especially Tim Shortley, my special, you know, advisor on conflict prevention, is working this issue intensively and so we're following it. And the UN, again, as I said, very quietly is playing a heroic role in trying to facilitate people leaving who want to leave safely.

QUESTION: Just very quickly as we mark World AIDS Day, and from your very special vantage point, are you discouraged by what's happened over the past year in Africa as far as HIV/AIDS is concerned -- the prevention, treatment and care of the (inaudible)?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER: To the contrary, I am encouraged by what's happened in Africa. And I think that through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and its role helping to mobilize international attention and funding to this issue that we've kept millions of lives -- millions of people alive who would have died previously. So I'm extremely excited.

Moreover, these countries have responded by trying to build their own health infrastructure and developing their own national plans to address HIV and AIDS. So I think that the picture which was quite hopeless in 2000 when we were spending \$300 million a year globally on HIV/AIDS, to today with the President's commitment and pushing for reauthorization of another \$15 billion for HIV and AIDS is an incredible change in the response, the international response and the African response to this.

I think people had all but given up when I traveled there in 2000 and in 2001 with Secretary Powell, and if you had -- if you were -- if you had HIV and AIDS you were going to die. But now today, people are living for many, many, many more years. So I'm really tremendously encouraged. And I think that this Administration, President Bush in particular, has been a real leader of this. And you know, just the fact that if you go to the White House and you see the big AIDS sign on the front of the door of the White House, I think is a tremendous symbol of the commitment of our country to helping address the HIV/AIDS crisis, especially in Africa.

MR. CASEY: Thank you.

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