



THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. BUSH




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President Bush Participates in Press Availability with President Kufuor of Ghana

Osu Castle
Accra, Ghana

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10:38 A.M. (Local)

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: Mr. President, I believe we agreed to expose ourselves to the ladies and gentlemen of the media. (Laughter.) And so we are ready for your questions.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Let me have a -- you want me to say something initially, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: Well, you may, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT BUSH: See, he doesn't want to hear what I said upstairs again. But I do want to say a couple of comments. First of all, thank you very much for your warm hospitality. I am really happy to be in Ghana, as is my wife -- this is her second time here, Mr. President. And I want to thank you for this grand welcome. And I appreciate your leadership.

Upstairs we talked about the Millennium Challenge Account. It is a sizeable sum of taxpayers' money, aimed at helping you achieve your objectives, because your government, led by you, is one that fights corruption and invests in its children, invests in the health of its citizens.

I'm oftentimes asked, what difference does it make to America if people are dying of malaria in a place like Ghana? It means a lot. It means a lot morally, it means a lot from a -- it's in our national interest. After all, if you believe we're in an ideological struggle against extremism, which I do, the only way these people can recruit is when they find hopeless people. And there's nothing more hopeless than a mother losing a child needlessly to a mosquito bite.

We spent time talking about trade, and I'm looking forward to meeting some of your businesses today, Mr. President. I believe firmly in fair trade, and I'm a strong supporter of AGOA. My predecessor put it in office; I worked to get it reauthorized. It's an important part of your development. Your businesspeople are making decisions. Your businesspeople are employing people in your country. And your businesspeople should have access to markets.

I do want to announce today that -- I am announcing a new initiative dealing with disease, and that is, our plan is to make it available a total of \$350 million over five years, to target what they call Neglected Tropical Diseases, such as hookworm or river blindness. This is all part of our initiative -- whether it be on HIV/AIDS or malaria, to help save lives. And so, Mr. President, we're looking forward to working with you to help save lives and to bring hope to families.

I want to also announce today that we're going to devote nearly \$17 million this year to help you on fighting malaria. I firmly believe your government will do a fine job in getting mosquito nets and -- to your people and medicines to your people. And so we're looking forward to helping you.

I also want to thank you for your leadership, Mr. President. As I said upstairs, I don't think a lot of people in Ghana -- I hope a lot of people in Ghana understand this, what I'm about to say, but you're really one of the respected leaders around the world, because of your firm commitment to peace. I thank you for your leadership here on the continent of Africa. My administration's strategy is to support African leaders to deal with Africa's problems.

I know there's a controversial subject brewing around that's not very well understood, and that's why would America stand up what's called AFRICOM? Let me talk about a couple of points there, Mr. President. First, this is a unique command structure for America. It is a command structure that is aiming to help provide military assistance to African nations, so African nations are more capable of dealing with Africa's conflicts -- like peacekeeping training. Obviously, we've got an issue in Darfur, that we've got to all work together to solve. And I'm very pleased that the AU and U.N. hybrid force should be moving in there. I'd like to see it moving quicker, but the whole purpose of AFRICOM is to help leaders deal with African problems.

Secondly, we do not contemplate adding new bases. In other words, the purpose of this is not to add military bases. I know there's rumors in Ghana, "All Bush is coming to do is try to convince you to put a big military base here." That's baloney. (Laughter.) Or as we say in Texas, that's bull. (Laughter.) Mr. President made it clear to me, he said, look, we -- you're not going to build in any bases in Ghana. I said, I understand; nor do we want to. Now, that doesn't mean we won't develop some kind of office somewhere in Africa. We haven't made our minds up. This is a new concept.

Now, Mr. President, I appreciate you giving me time to address this issue. I want to dispel the notion that all of a sudden America is bringing all kinds of military to Africa. It's just simply not true. This is a way of making our command relevant to the strategy that we have put in place. And I feel no more confident than describing -- I feel very confident in describing that strategy next to you, because I am confident, Mr. President, in your capacity to be a strong leader. You've proved that to be the case.

And finally, he said we're both leaving office together. That's true. But we're going to leave strong, with our heads held high, and we're going to sprint to the finish, aren't we Mr. President?

PRESIDENT KUFOUR: Indeed. Thank you. (Applause.)

PRESIDENT BUSH: Good, thank you. Questions?

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: Thank you, Mr. President. Well, may I just compliment what the President has just said. I am happy, one, for the President dispelling any notion that the United States of America is intending to build military bases on the continent of Africa. I believe the explanation the President has given should put fade to the speculation, so that the relationship between us and the United States will grow stronger and with mutual respect. And that's for one.

Two, I should thank the President for the initiative he's just announced of creating a fund to fight the neglected diseases on the continent. My government, for example, and I would say that for perhaps all African governments, is committed to fighting these diseases, but on a very shoestring budget, so that if our friends internationally would come out and launch initiatives like this to support us fight these diseases, then I will say, welcome and thank you for that initiative.

Then the \$17 million you are extending to my government to help in the fight against malaria. Just this morning I saw in one of our papers that malaria, which perhaps kills more of us than even HIV/AIDS in Ghana, has increased by about 13 percent in our community. So any help that we can get in our fight to contain and eradicate this disease should be most welcome to the people of Ghana. And I thank you for what you've done.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes, sir. Thank you.

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: Thank you. I believe we'll --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Want to answer a few questions?

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: Yes, we can take questions.

PRESIDENT BUSH: All right, good. Why don't you call on somebody in your press.

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: Please. Now you identify yourself. Whoever is going to speak should identify themselves and the papers or radio stations, television stations they are working for.

Q Good morning, your Excellencies, President Kufuor and President Bush. Thank you for taking my questions. First, a little bias, first to President Kufuor. I would like to know, fighting HIV/AIDS and malaria is the focus of this visit, but can you tell us in what other concrete terms this visit will benefit the economy of Ghana, and Ghanaians in particular, since both of you leave office at the end of this year?

And then to President Bush, we know that your support for the fight against HIV/AIDS has been driven by promoting sexual abstinence and fidelity to each other's partner. In African societies, we know that this doesn't really strike a chord because multiple sexual relationships or partner relationships is the reality, though it's not spoken of in public. So how realistic an approach would you want to be adopted in fighting HIV/AIDS within this particular context? Thank you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes, thanks.

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: I answer first. The fight against HIV and malaria is not time-bound, I'm sure you would agree with me. The malaria, for instance, was with us from perhaps time immemorial, and it's still with us. Fortunately we happen to be living in science and technology times, and solutions are being found quickly to pandemics. So within my time, I am happy the President of the United States of America has come out with large resources, talking of something like \$45 billion -- it's not something you hear of every day.

So I welcome that. And this money I hope will be put to the best uses in terms of engaging the best scientific and technological means to tackle this disease. The research is still ongoing. Nobody is announcing a find yet. But we shouldn't give up. And within my time, I'm happy this help is coming to infuse the efforts we are already making, so that the researchers will continue, and long after me, perhaps, some clever person, scientist, may come out with a solution. This is how I want to look at this. I do not give a time bound to the solution that we seek.

PRESIDENT BUSH: First of all, obviously the status quo is not acceptable. One of the reasons that I was motivated to put forth a significant request to our Congress for a comprehensive program to deal with HIV/AIDS is I felt it was unacceptable to stand by and watch a generation of people, a generation of folks be eradicated.

And so I understand customs and norms, but it seems like to me that if you really want to solve the problem, step one is to have a comprehensive prevention program. And you mentioned abstinence -- no question, that's a part of the program, or be faithful. But also, I just want to remind you, there's a third part called condoms. So we have an ABC program that is a comprehensive part of the strategy.

And it's working. Uganda, for example, was the first country to really put the ABC strategy in place, and the results are measurable. All I'm interested in is results. I'm wise enough to set the strategy and change the tactics if they're not working.

Secondly, part of our strategy is to dispense antiretroviral drugs. When I first became President, 50,000 people were receiving ARVs. Today over 1.2 million are. As I said to our country, this is good. These are measurable results, and it's a good start, but it's only a start. And that's why, as the President mentioned, I've asked for Congress to double our budget on HIV/AIDS to \$30 billion over five years.

And finally, part of the strategy is to take care of the orphans who have been left behind. Now, I don't believe that sometimes bureaucracies are all that effective. So part of our strategies is to trust the local leadership to devise strategies that best suits their country. And the other part of the strategy is to empower these compassionate folks who want to help, whether they be faith-based or otherwise.

And so to answer your question, Ma'am, I monitor the results. And if it looks like it's not working, then we'll change. But thus far I can report, at least to our citizens, that the program has been unbelievably effective. And we're going to stay at it. And the purpose of this trip is to remind the American taxpayers that it's in their interest to help save lives on the continent of Africa. So this program will extend beyond my time as office, as well as John Kufuor's time in office. (Applause.)

Ben Feller, Associated --

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: May I just add, Mr. President --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes, sure.

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: -- to what you said. Unless we are challenging the statistic given by the States Commission of Ghana, the very reputable establishment, the prevalence rate dropped from 2006, when it was 2.6 percent, to 2.2 percent in 2007. I believe that's considerable. And perhaps some of the credit should be given to the extension of help in terms of resources, including the antiretroviral drugs that we got from development partners like the United States of America.

So even as we agree to perhaps a bit of looseness in our ways, we must also admit that whatever input we are making, are contributing towards enabling us contain the menace -- I believe I should add that. From 2.6 percent prevalence rate of HIV in 2007, we got 2.2 percent, a reduction of prevalence in 2006; I believe we should acknowledge that.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Alright. Ben Feller, Associated Press. I will identify him for you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: Thank you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Ben Feller. (Laughter.)

Q Thank you for covering that, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes. I was afraid you couldn't handle it.

Q Thank you. President Bush, I would like to ask you about Pakistan. President Musharraf's party has been routed in parliamentary elections there and it appears that he's lost the support of his people. Do you see this as the beginning of the end for him? Do you still view him as a credible leader in the fight against terrorism?

President Kufuor, I would like to ask you, President Bush has made a point on this trip of saying that helping Africa is in America's interest, but in the United States a lot of people are focused on their own families and their own finances. Do you believe Americans see it in their interest to help Africa?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes. I might try to help you out on the last question. America is wealthy enough to do both.

There was a victory for the people of Pakistan and that is, there were elections held that have been judged as being fair. And the people have spoken. I view that as a significant victory. I view it as a part of the victory in the war on terror. After all, ideologues can't stand -- like these guys we're dealing with -- can't stand free societies. That's why they try to kill innocent people. That's why they tried to intimidate people during the election process.

And so I'm -- I appreciate the fact that President Musharraf has done exactly that which he said he was going to do. He said he'd hold elections, he said he would get rid of his emergency law. And so it's now time for the newly elected folks to show up and form their government, and the question then is, will they be friends of the United States, and I certainly hope so.

We view Pakistan as an important ally. We've got common interests. We've got interests in dealing with radicals who killed Benazir Bhutto. We've got interests in helping to make sure there's no safe haven from which people can plot and plan attacks against the United States of America and Pakistan. And so that's my take on the elections.

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: Thank you, and whether American interests coincides with African interests, I would say yes. Yes. One should ask what the whole idea of the United States is about. The U.S. is a melting pot of all the races and nationalities of the world. Your country has a large content of African Americans, so that I would expect that constituency of Africa -- and incidentally the African Union has itemized the people of African descent as the sixth region of Africa. So we look on the African Americans as our kit and kind, and they constitute a sizeable constituency in the United States. It should be in their interest to support any help the United States can extend to Africa. That's one.

Two, we are all moving into a global village, and problems overspill easily, especially with the free movements of people and trade, so that if the United States should lock itself into isolationism and think they are safer there, then I would say perhaps they don't know what is coming, because global village is a reality. Migration cannot be stopped, and if you do not help, then the vibrant youth of Africa, driven by the technological age forces -- they watch television, the Internet, and so forth -- they want to move and see what's happening around the world. They will come to you, and if you do not help us to prepare this youth, then whatever youth would land on your shores would come with all the roughness, the hurry and that would be your headache.

So I believe it's enlightenment for the United States government to want to support them here. And then we talk terrorism, which has no bounds. As evidence, when the 9/11 happened in your country, it wasn't only Americans who became victims. Some Ghanaians died in that event, and shows we have common interests somewhere. So these and other factors should account for why the United States, perhaps industrially and otherwise the most advanced country in the world, should be concerned about the plight of other peoples.

Q Good morning, Your Excellencies. My question is to President Bush. Looking at Africa from afar, things might look bleak, but all may not be lost yet. A new Africa is emerging. But in your candid view, what do you think Africa must do, and what kind of leadership do you expect to see in Africa? And how will the U.S. help in this regard, to push forward the agenda to transform the continent into a better place for its people? And secondly, what do you hope to achieve from your five-nation tour, and why have you decided to visit Africa on the last lap of your term, and how do you want to insure continuity in whatever you hope to achieve?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thanks. I actually went to Africa on the first lap of my presidency, too. This is my second trip to the continent of Africa, and I've come to remind our fellow citizens that it is in our interest

to help countries deal with curable diseases like malaria, and difficult diseases like HIV/AIDS; that it's in our interest to promote trade between the continent of Africa and the United States of America; that it's in our interest to provide education money so governments will educate children.

And there's no better way of making that point than to be in Ghana, where people will get to see firsthand what I'm talking about. It's one thing to be giving speeches in America, it's another thing to actually come to Ghana and meet different folks that are involved with making Ghana a better place.

Secondly, first of all, Africa has changed since I've been the President in a very positive way; it's not because of me, it's because of African leaders, I want you to know. But there was six regional conflicts when I became the President. Take Liberia, for example. It was a real issue and a real problem, and along with Nigeria, and with John's advice, for example, I made some decisions along with other leaders that helped put in place the first democratically elected woman on the continent's history. And I'm going there tomorrow to herald the successes she's done, and to reaffirm our commitment that we'll help.

In other words, conflict resolution has been taking place. And the United States hasn't tried to impose a will, we've just tried to be a useful partner, like in Eastern Congo, for example, working with the Presidents of Rwanda and Congo and Burundi.

Secondly, democracy is making progress across the continent of Africa. One reason why is because there are examples like John Kufuor for people to look at. I'm telling you, the guy is a respected person; people look at him, and they say, this is the kind of leader that we respect.

And thirdly, our aid program has changed from one that basically said, here's your money, good luck, to one that said, in return for generosity, we expect there to be certain habits in place, like fighting corruption, or investing in the education of children. I don't think that's too much to ask in return for U. S. taxpayers' money. It hasn't been asked in the past. This is a novel approach, interestingly enough. But I feel confident in asking nations to adhere to good principles because I believe in setting high standards for African leaders. I'm confident in the capacity of the leaders I have met -- not every single leader -- but on this trip, the leaders I'm with are leaders who have committed themselves to the good of their people, have committed themselves to honest government, have committed themselves to investing in people, they're more interested in leaving behind a legacy of education than leaving behind fancy -- a self-serving government. And there's no better way of making that point than coming to the continent. And that's why I'm here, and I'm glad I am here. It's been a great trip, and it's -- and I appreciate the hospitality of my friend, and so does Laura.

Let's see here. John McKinnon. He would be from your Wall Street Journal. Yes, that's a sophisticated paper, no question about that.

Q Thanks for that plug.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes. I didn't say sophisticated reporter, I said sophisticated paper. But -- and a sophisticated reporter, as well. Yes, Johnny.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to ask both you leaders about the increasing role of China in Africa's development. What do you think is positive about its role in aid and commerce, and what do you think it could be doing a better job with? In particular, do you think it's ignoring human rights issues and corruption?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, I might let John start. He's, after all, been engaged with leaders. I have an opinion, but we'll let him start.

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: I believe we should all agree for starters that the world is opening up and opening up fast. Values are becoming uniform, and the -- our multinational efforts agenda, openness and competitiveness, and all inclusiveness. Now China is spreading out and it's here in Africa, and in Ghana too. It's coming not as a colonial power, as far as we can see. It's coming, if I may put it, as a guest, and I believe on our terms, on the terms of the African nations.

And I can assure you our nations are not succumbing to dictates and impositions, not from China nor elsewhere. If it's something that Africa wants to buy and it can find it economical, then whatever it is, that's where Africa will buy it from. And China is proving quite competitive. So how do we stop China? We can't stop China. We are relating, and we want to relate on common values. We believe that's what again globalization should be all about. We are in the United Nations with China. We talk world trade organizations and I believe China is finding its way into that.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes.

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: We want peace around the world. How do we have peace if we do not engage each other peacefully in trade, in common dialogue and in other respects? So this is China -- I feel has been useful, and I would say, so far, so good. And I believe Africa is showing awareness because Africa came out of colonialism not too long ago. Ghana, for instance -- the first country south of the Sahara to have gained independence -- gained independence only 50 years ago. And I don't think the memory is lost to Africa.

So whatever friendships we are engaging in now, we try as hard as possible to turn our new partners around. We try to see if we are engaging on our best terms so we maximize returns for us. Of course, we also care about our partners feeling that they haven't come in here to be short changed. There should be mutual advantage to all of us, and this is how we are engaging with China. So as far as we are concerned, so far, it's alright with China.

Human rights, well, this would call for knowledge of what obtains in China. I don't pretend that we are too informed of what happens inside China, but we believe that in due course, whatever the situation is, there will be a tendency towards liberalization. Before the relationship with China was government to government; now it's getting to be people to people. It seems all of us are coming under the influences of the information and communications technology.

So our views are becoming the same. People are beginning to speak for themselves everywhere and standing for their rights. I believe even in China this will come to prevail in due course. And on this basis, I don't think it would be right for people to ostracize. Rather, we should find ways and means to

engage with each other so it becomes a more understanding world for all of us. Thank you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: I don't view Africa as zero-sum for China and the United States. I mean, I think we can pursue agendas that -- without creating a great sense of competition. I mean, inherent in your question is that I view China as a fierce competitor on the continent of Africa -- no, I don't.

I view -- first of all, I just will tell you that our policy is aimed at helping people. Trade helps people. I mean, one reason I'm committed to trying to get the Doha Round complete is because the benefits of trade will far exceed moneys given. I believe that it's in our nation's interests -- like, I noticed on the seal of the country it says, freedom and justice. There's nothing that promotes justice more than good education.

Now, I do think that it's in the leaders' interests to have some high standards, like, for example, I presume that countries are saying that if you bring your capital, make sure that you employ African workers. I know some of the leaders I've talked to have said that one of the things we're going to do is make sure that our environment is protected, our trees are protected, that we're not going to allow ourselves to become exploited; and that we in fact, want to have relations with different countries, including China, but there is -- there will be some high standards. And that's the way it should be: high standards for every country. And the United States of course is willing to live with those standards. We believe in those standards.

And so one thing that I hope that we're getting, that we all can do better, is to encourage value-added processing. And one of the things that has been lacking in Africa's past is for the people to really truly realize the benefits of the resources at home because those resources are just dug out of the ground or grown and just shipped overseas, when in fact, if there could be facilities that take advantage of those resources, it will create more employment for people. And I know that John is concerned about that.

And my only point is there ought to be -- you know, these countries ought to set standards and expect countries to live by them. And there's plenty of leaders who are willing to do that.

Anyway, thank you very much, Mr. President. It's been a joyful experience here in the press conference.

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: Thank you, Mr. President, for coming.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT KUFUOR: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

END 11:12 A.M. (Local)

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