

Students. Read! Read! Read!

Mr. Devan. Viers Mill, what's our goal?

Students. Read! Read! Read!

Mr. Devan. Because great readers have?

Students. Great choices!

The President. So you guys are readers. And so, being a reader myself, I wanted to come meet all these outstanding readers. Because you guys are reading so much and you're working so hard, you guys are doing great in terms of your test scores and how this school is doing. And so this was just a great example of how much improvement a school can make just in a really short time when you've got motivated kids.

So I wanted to come by and introduce myself, to say I'm very proud of you. I am hoping that you guys will continue to read, read, read, and that all of you are going to be really working hard not just this year, but all the way through high school and then all the way through col-

lege, because how many people here plan to go to college? Everybody, right? I just wanted to make sure everybody's going to college. But that means everybody's going to have to work hard.

So here's what I'm going to do. I didn't want to give a long speech. What I'm going to do is, I'm just going to come around, I'm going to shake people's hands, I'm going to say hi to folks, and I'm sure that somebody out there is going to be taking a bunch of pictures. [*Laughter*] And you guys can tell me what you've been reading. All right? So get ready to tell me what you've been reading lately and what's going on. All right? Okay, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Situation in Sudan October 19, 2009

Today my administration is releasing a comprehensive strategy to confront the serious and urgent situation in Sudan.

For years, the people of Sudan have faced enormous and unacceptable hardship. The genocide in Darfur has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and left millions more displaced. Conflict in the region has wrought more suffering, posing dangers beyond Sudan's borders and blocking the potential of this important part of Africa. Sudan is now poised to fall further into chaos if swift action is not taken.

Our conscience and our interests in peace and security call upon the United States and the international community to act with a sense of urgency and purpose. First, we must seek a definitive end to conflict, gross human rights abuses, and genocide in Darfur. Second, the comprehensive peace agreement between the north and south in Sudan must be implemented to create the possibility of long-term peace. These two goals must both be pursued simultaneously with urgency. Achieving them requires the commitment of the United States as well as the active participation of international partners.

Concurrently, we will work aggressively to ensure that Sudan does not provide a safe haven for international terrorists.

The United States Special Envoy has worked actively and effectively to engage all of the parties involved, and he will continue to pursue engagement that saves lives and achieves results. Later this week, I will renew the declaration of a national emergency with respect to Sudan, which will continue tough sanctions on the Sudanese Government. If the Government of Sudan acts to improve the situation on the ground and to advance peace, there will be incentives; if it does not, then there will be increased pressure imposed by the United States and the international community. As the United States and our international partners meet our responsibility to act, the Government of Sudan must meet its responsibilities to take concrete steps in a new direction.

Over the last several years, governments, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals—and from around the world—have taken action to address the situation in Sudan and to end the genocide in Darfur. Going forward, all of our efforts must be measured by the lives

that are led by the people of Sudan. After so much suffering, they deserve a future that allows them to live with greater dignity, security, and opportunity. It will not be easy, and there are no simple answers to the extraordinary challenges that confront this part of the world. But now is the time for all of us to come to-

gether and to make a strong and sustained effort on behalf of a better future for the people of Sudan.

NOTE: The statement referred to U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan Maj. Gen. J. Scott Gration, USAF (Ret.).

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq October 20, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. Before I discuss the meeting that I've just had with Prime Minister Maliki, I just want to make a brief statement about Afghanistan.

I had the opportunity to speak with President Karzai this morning, and I wanted to congratulate him on accepting the certification of the recent election. As we all know, this has been a very difficult time in Afghanistan, to not only carry out an election under difficult circumstances, where there were a whole host of security issues that had to be resolved, but also postelection, a lot of uncertainty.

President Karzai, as well as the other candidates, I think have shown that they have the interest of the Afghan people at heart, that this is a reflection of a commitment to rule of law, and a insistence that the Afghan people's will should be done. And so I expressed the American people's appreciation for this step.

As I mentioned before, this has been a difficult election. You have violent forces opposed to democracy in Afghanistan. And yet despite these very difficult conditions, what we've seen is elections take place. We have now seen the IEC and the ECC in Afghanistan complete their work. We have seen the candidates expressing a willingness to abide by constitutional law, and there is a path forward in order to complete this election process.

I want to give particular thanks to Ambassador Karl Eikenberry and his team, who have been working tirelessly throughout this process. I also want to commend Senator John Kerry, who was in the region traveling and ended up working extensively with Ambassador Eikenberry and was extraordinarily constructive and very helpful. So I think he deserves great congratulations.

Moving forward, we will continue to work with our ISAF partners as well as the Afghan Government, however this election turns out, to ensure that we can move the Afghan—that we can move Afghanistan towards peace and security and prosperity and that the will of the Afghan people is ultimately done. So we are pleased with the steps that have been taken today, and we hope that we can build on this progress.

I finally want to thank the incredible work of our U.S. military and the young men and women who are stationed in Afghanistan who are doing so much to help bring about a more secure and prosperous and democratic Afghanistan.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to see Prime Minister Maliki once again. We had a wide-ranging discussion about the continuing progress that Iraq is making. We have seen in the last several months a consolidation of a commitment to democratic politics inside of Iraq. We are very interested, both of us, in making sure that Iraq has an election law that is completed on time so that elections can take place on time in January. That is consistent with the transition that has been taking place, and I reemphasized my commitment to Prime Minister Maliki that we will have our combat troops out of Iraq by August of next year and all of our troops out of Iraq by 2011.

But we didn't just talk about military and security issues. What is wonderful about this trip is that it represents a transition in our bilateral relationship, so that we are moving now to issues beyond security and we are beginning to talk about economy, trade, commerce. The business and investment conference that's taking place is going to be very well attended. It