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UPCOMING ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the situation concerning the upcoming elections in Nigeria.

The people of Nigeria have a historic achievement within their grasp: their country's first peaceful, democratic transfer of power from one elected civilian government to another. To secure this victory for themselves and for Africa, and to retain the kind of international confidence in Nigeria's future that is essential for the country's growth, Nigerians need and deserve the strongest possible international support for free, fair, and peaceful elections on April 14 and 21.

Successful elections are not guaranteed. Political violence and serious irregularities have tarnished past polling in parts of the country, denying some Nigerians their democratic rights. No one truly interested in Nigeria's long-term stability and prosperity can accept repeats of these incidents as regular features of the country's political landscape.

There is already cause for concern this time around. Regrettably, preparations for this month's elections have been sluggish, and the independence of the electoral commission has been compromised. Important national discussions about corruption and accountability have been temporarily hijacked by elaborate preelection maneuvering.

But the Nigerian people can still succeed in exercising their democratic rights and taking control of their national destiny. The rule of law, not the wishes of the powerful, can resolve outstanding questions about the electoral process. American interests in working with a strong and democratic Nigerian partner will remain powerful regardless of who is victorious when the returns come in, which is precisely why we should use our voice now, not to favor any party or candidate, but to support Nigeria's democracy.

FIFTY CALIBER SNIPER RIFLES

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, militaries around the world use .50 caliber sniper rifles which are noted for their powerful and destructive capabilities. In the hands of a terrorist, these weapons could inflict devastating results. The fact that terrorists can legally obtain weapons in the United States with such destructive capabilities puts us all at great risk.

In 1985, a previously classified National War College strategic study report, written by a former Deputy Assistant Director of the U.S. Secret Service, warned of the growing threat from large caliber sniper rifles, specifically .50 caliber rifles. These "long range weapons pose a significant threat for U.S. National Command Authority figures if used by terrorists or other assailants," the Secret Service warned. "These weapons are more accurate than shoulder fired antitank rockets and, if used against aircraft, [are] immune to electronic counter measures."

Ten years later the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit global policy think tank, issued a report identifying .50 caliber sniper rifles as a serious threat to the security of U.S. Air Force bases. After noting the success of Barrett sniper rifles against light armored vehicles in the 1991 gulf war, the report noted, "Such weapons also give light forces a portable and quite deadly option against parked aircraft. These rifles are effective against man-sized targets up to 1,600 meters away and could hit aircraft sized targets at even greater ranges." It further states that, "it seems only a matter of time before these or similar weapons find their way into the arsenals of potential adversaries, if they have not already done so."

The August 2003 U.S. Army Intelligence training handbook, "A Military Guide to Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century," specifically identified large caliber sniper rifles as an attractive weapon for terrorists to use for an assassination. It noted that .50 caliber sniper rifles are of particular interest because they can engage attacks on "targets that are difficult to get close enough for other weapons," yet "can also effectively engage light armored vehicles."

A 2004 report on security at Los Angeles International Airport, LAX, specifically warned of snipers using .50 caliber rifles to fire at parked or taxiing aircraft among a list of potential terrorist attack tactics. The RAND Corporation compiled this list by considering information gathered by intelligence organizations based on the historical tendencies and capabilities of terrorist organizations. The analysis however was not able to identify "any truly satisfactory" security improvement options to protect against such sniper attacks.

In November 2004, the Homeland Security Center at the University of Southern California, funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, identified .50 caliber sniper rifles as an imminent threat to civil aviation. A risk analysis prepared by the center stated that the range and power of .50 caliber sniper rifles enable them to "target fuel tanks, passengers, pilots, and down aircraft in the worst case." It also noted that al Qaida has acquired and used these rifles against coalition forces in Iraq.

These destructive weapons are currently subject to only minimal Federal

regulation. Buyers need to only be 18 years old, rather than the 21 years of age which is required for handgun purchases. There is no minimum age requirement for the possession of a .50 caliber weapon and no regulation on second hand sales. Congress must do more to help keep military style firearms out of the hands of terrorists.

HONORING OF DREW BLEDSOE

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today I wish to honor former New England Patriots Quarterback Drew Bledsoe on his retirement, after 14 years in the National Football League, NFL.

Drew Bledsoe helped usher in the modern era of Patriots football. Throughout his career, Drew Bledsoe may have also played for the Buffalo Bills, an AFC East rival of the Patriots, and for the Dallas Cowboys, but he got his start in chilly Foxboro, MA.

Fourteen years ago, a young Bledsoe was the first overall selection in the NFL Draft for New England draft of Washington State. He brought the Patriots to their first Super Bowl in 11 years, and despite ultimately losing to Brett Favre and the Green Bay Packers, a newfound feeling of excitement and pride overtook New England's football fans. And that feeling hasn't subsided.

After Tom Brady went down in the AFC playoff in 2002, Bledsoe led the Patriots to victory over the Pittsburgh Steelers, ensuring the Pats a spot in Super Bowl XXXVI. And as you know, that was just the beginning of the New England football dynasty.

Bledsoe is a four-time Pro-Bowl quarterback, who throughout his career threw for more than 44,000 yards and completed more than 250 touchdown passes. He finished his career 7th all-time in yards passing, 13th in touchdowns, and 5th in completions.

His career off the field was just as impressive. Bledsoe has long worked to help improve the lives of children by teaching parenting skills through both the Drew Bledsoe Foundation and Parenting with Dignity. The programs' curriculum, which teaches the importance of family values, is used nationwide, reaching an estimated 1.75 million American families. He has also served as international chairman of the Children's Miracle Network, helping to raise millions of dollars to benefit children nationwide.

Bledsoe is the recipient of the Thurman Munson Humanitarian Award, the NFL Alumni Spirit Award for exemplifying the spirit of the NFL caring for kids and the Walter Payton Man of the Year Award, chosen by his teammates for demonstrating balance between civic and professional responsibilities. He also received the Ed Block Courage award, chosen by his teammates as the NFL player demonstrating the most courage and character.

Drew Bledsoe has conducted himself with both dignity and maturity

throughout his 14 years in the NFL, and today I, along with Patriots fans across New England, congratulate him on a fantastic career and wish him success in the next chapter of his life.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO ELEANOR SANTEE

• Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, today, I would like to honor a woman of incomparable dedication and grace. After 26 years of loyal service to the Scranton School District, Mrs. Eleanor Santee retired from her position as a secretary at Robert Morris Elementary School on March 2, 2007.

Throughout Eleanor's years of service, the combination of her experience and work ethic allowed her to provide capable administrative support for the three principals of Robert Morris Elementary under whom she served. More importantly, Eleanor took the time and initiative to provide support, encouragement, and friendship to the thousands of students who passed through the school during tenure. Some people with Eleanor's years of experience might have become complacent, but Eleanor understood that in order to be successful a school must go beyond mere academic success; it must also provide a nurturing environment where pupils can develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for success throughout life. Eleanor made an indelible mark on Robert Morris Elementary and all who passed through there. She can take pride in a job well done.

In retirement, I have no doubt that Eleanor will continue to be an active citizen of my hometown, Scranton, PA, where she resides with her husband Richard.

I congratulate Eleanor on her many years of service to Robert Morris Elementary School and wish her the best in health and happiness at the completion of an admirable career.●

APPRECIATION FOR TOM GARY, JR.

• Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to commend Tom Gary of Greenwood, MS, for his distinguished service during the past year as president of the Delta Council.

Delta Council is an economic development organization representing the business, professional, and agricultural leadership of the 18 delta and part-delta counties of Northwest Mississippi. Delta Council was organized in 1935 to help meet the challenges which confronted this region of our State.

A major concern of the Mississippi Delta was the impact of Mississippi River and tributary flooding. Flood protection and drainage have severely challenged the delta region throughout its history. This is an area of concern where Tom Gary has distinguished himself as a leader. Tom took the lead-

ership of the Delta Council Flood Control Committee following a serious delta flood in 1991 and led the effort to accelerate construction and completion of all Yazoo Basin projects. The 1991 flood inundated more than 1.1 million acres in 15 delta towns; and it seriously damaged schools, roads, public facilities and cropland. After Gary's term as Flood Control Committee chairman, cities such as Greenville, the largest town in north Mississippi, received benefits that will provide 100-year flood protection.

Tom serves as vice president of Delta Wildlife, chairman of the Leflore County Farm Service Agency Committee, commissioner and treasurer of the Leflore County Soil and Water Conservation Commission, director of the Business and Industry Political Education Committee and as the Cotton Board director of Farmers Supply Cooperative. He was also appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture as a member of the Cotton Board.

Through his work with Delta Council, Tom has become a strong advocate and effective leader in advancing Delta Council's mission in adult literacy, the fight against critical teacher shortages in the primary and secondary school system, improved access to health care, and in transportation developments which are so vital to the delta region.

I congratulate Tom Gary and his wife Moxie for the contribution they have made to the delta through their service in Delta Council during the past year.●

TRIBUTE TO FRANCIS HARVEY

• Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to speak about a recent change in the top leadership in our Army. Dr. Francis Harvey departed as Secretary of the Army at a ceremony at Fort Myer, VA. Farewell ceremonies are often held at Fort Myer for soldiers of all ranks as they pass the torch to those men and women who will take over the responsibility of defending our Nation. The ceremony at Fort Myer honors their contributions and symbolizes the continuity between the past and the future. Secretary of the Army Harvey's service as Secretary of the Army was during a particularly crucial time for the Army. The Nation is at war against a dangerous and determined enemy. That war is of long duration, and the Army has borne the brunt of the fighting. The nature of this war, and the demands it has made on the Army, has resulted in great challenges for the senior leadership of the Army. Secretary Harvey accepted those challenges and worked with skill, determination, and honor to overcome them and keep our Army strong and ready today and to prepare it for tomorrow.

Many of us in Congress know of and appreciated Secretary Harvey's commitment to the Army. But the person who is best able to tell of his accomplishments and his contribution to the Army is his close partner, the Chief of

Staff of the Army. I am pleased to commend to my colleagues GEN Peter Schoomaker's speech thanking Secretary Harvey for his service to the Army. I bid Secretary Harvey farewell, thank him for his service to our country, and wish him all the best in the next chapter of his life.

The material follows.

SPEECH BY GENERAL SCHOOMAKER

Secretary and Mrs. Harvey, Deputy Secretary England, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Pace . . . Sergeant Major of the Army Preston, other distinguished guests and friends. Today Dr. Fran Harvey, our 19th Secretary of the Army, departs our ranks but not our hearts. I am grateful to have had the privilege and honor to serve by his side. When Secretary Harvey was sworn in back in November 2004 I provided him a photo of a Soldier on bended knee in Iraq carrying an almost unbearable load.

I explained to Secretary Harvey that this picture should serve to remind him—that like all leaders across our Army—everything he does will impact our Soldiers on the ground. Our challenge, therefore, was to lighten the load our Soldiers bear (in other words, to “take things out of their rucksacks,” as we like to say).

While he has kept it on his desk for two years let me tell you in no uncertain terms Secretary Harvey needed no such reminder. He was quick to state, and truly believed, that “Soldiers are and will always be our centerpiece. Their efforts are the reason the Army is one of the most respected organizations in America.”

This conviction was evident in everything I saw him do as our Secretary. Everything was based on his passionate concern for the Army, its Soldiers, their families, and our Army Civilians.

This concern is reflected in the other picture on his desk, one of two ladies, the mothers of two fallen Soldiers. That picture serves as a reminder of the sacrifices our Soldiers and their families are making. His dedication was reflected in his personal and professional commitment to “provide a quality of life for our Soldiers that matched the quality of service they provide to the Nation.”

And he has worked tirelessly to do just that. Because of his vision, his dedication, and his unfailing commitment he departs our ranks today knowing with absolute certainty that our Soldiers and their families as well as the Army Civilians who support them have benefited greatly from his service. I have no doubt that our Army is far better today than we were just two years ago.

Our progress in many cases is the direct result of his determination to stand up to those who challenged the basis of our requirements to properly support our Soldiers.

He also inspired us to think differently and far more strategically about how we “do business.” Without doubt these qualities are a testament to the unique brand of values-based, principle-centered leadership he demonstrated with absolute conviction in his service as Secretary of the Army.

In short his impact on our Army has been profound. He has moved us significantly forward in our collective and continuing efforts to meet the needs of the Nation that we serve.

My remarks will be brief because you came to hear Secretary Harvey, not me. We've convened today to honor him and his family and bear witness to the sacrifice of our Soldiers and the contributions our Army is making worldwide in defense of the Nation.

We often overlook the fact that to perform his duties as our Secretary . . . he has endured his own experience in “family separation” by being apart from Mary his gracious