

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama: D-Day Changed an Entire Century

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — It was unknowable on June 6, 1944, but much of the progress that defined the 20th century began when Allied forces stormed a slice of French beach only six miles long and two miles wide, President Obama said in a speech commemorating the 65th anniversary of the World War II D-Day landings.

“What we must not forget is that D-Day was a time and a place where the bravery and the selflessness of a few was able to change the course of an entire century,” Obama said at the elegantly maintained American Cemetery above Omaha Beach near Colleville-sur-Mer in Normandy. Unlike the overcast day 65 years ago, the afternoon commemoration took place under beautiful skies.

It was at Omaha and similar beaches with code names like Juno, Sword, Gold and Utah and at Point du Hoc that the Allied armies of Britain, Canada, Poland, the Free French and the United States landed in the largest amphibious landing in modern history, aided by daring behind-the-lines airborne landings of American and British paratroopers.

The president was joined at the commemoration by the political leaders of France, Britain and Canada, and thousands of veterans and their families.

“This day marks not only the triumph of freedom, but it also marks how the trans-Atlantic alliance has allowed for extraordinary prosperity and security on both sides of the Atlantic,” Obama said at a press conference with French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Caen before the ceremonies in Normandy.

The president’s speech marked the end of a five-day, four-nation international tour that began in Saudi Arabia, then on to Egypt, Germany and France. In Germany Obama toured the Buchenwald concentration camp with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, who survived internment in the camp. Obama was joined at Normandy by first lady Michelle Obama, French President Sarkozy and his wife, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and his wife, and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his wife. Also joining the official party was Prince Charles of Britain.

But the president said the most important guests were the Allied veterans who were able to attend. “Long after our

time on this Earth has passed, one word will still bring forth the pride and awe of men and women who will never meet the heroes who sit before us: D-Day,” the president said.

MIDDLE EAST AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

At the Caen press conference, Obama and Sarkozy told reporters they agreed to push ahead in efforts for a two-state solution for Middle East peace and to oppose efforts by Iran to develop nuclear weapons.

“I said to the president that we totally agreed with him on the Israeli and Palestinian issue: two states that need to live alongside one another, an Israeli state whose security we’re very attached to and a secure Palestinian state,” Sarkozy said.

Obama thanked Sarkozy for his leadership on a range of issues and the often difficult diplomacy involved. “That kind of approach I think is serving the interest of France, but it’s also serving the interest of the world, and we’re very grateful for that,” Obama said.

Sarkozy, who met recently with the Iranian foreign affairs minister, said he told the minister to accept the outstretched hand of friendship and cooperation offered by Obama and set a meeting with the six nations that are struggling to convince Iran not to develop nuclear weapons, and that they are aligned if Iran wants to access civilian nuclear energy. France, Britain, Germany, Russia, China and the United States have been working closely together to resolve issues related to Iran’s nuclear ambitions.

Obama said his administration is breaking with past practices and has offered to have direct talks with Iran. “We are saying we are willing to have direct negotiations with the Iranians on a whole range of issues without preconditions, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and resolve,” Obama told reporters.

The president also said that North Korea’s actions in the last several months have been “extraordinarily provocative.”

Many Muslims Saw Hope, Change in Obama’s Cairo Speech

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — “The speech gave me hope that change can happen, especially by collaboration and by seeing common ground and interest,” 19-year-old Ingy Hassieb said. The Egyptian college student reflected on the words he had

heard when the new American president, Barack Obama, came to Cairo with the call to initiate “a new beginning between the United States and Muslims.”

President Obama chose to make a speech to Muslims around the world from the historic campus of Cairo University on June 4, keeping a pledge he had made during his presidential campaign. Reaching across the world by every means that a technological age offers, Obama delivered a 55-minute speech that was interrupted 42 times by applause from the more than 3,000 people jammed into the university’s Great Hall. The speech was co-hosted by Al-Azhar University and Cairo University.

“For over a thousand years, Al-Azhar has stood as a beacon of Islamic learning, and for over a century, Cairo University has been a source of Egypt’s advancement. And together, you represent the harmony between tradition and progress. I’m grateful for your hospitality, and the hospitality of the people of Egypt. And I’m also proud to carry with me the goodwill of the American people, and a greeting of peace from Muslim communities in my country: *Assalaamu alaykum*,” Obama said in his opening remarks.

Speaking of President Obama’s call for change in the often strained relationship with Muslims worldwide, Hassieb said that “even if it is a slow process, it is not impossible,” according to news reports.

For Jordanian student Sulafah Al Shami, Obama’s speech offered a glimpse of America she had not seen before and one that she found “refreshing.”

“It is great to see an American president advocating world diplomacy and partnership instead of reinforcing the image of America as an overpowering superpower who everybody should submit to,” Al Shami said, according to a New York Times news report.

Dhaka University political science professor Shariful Islam in Bangladesh told America.gov that it is a “charismatic speech by a charismatic world leader, Barack Obama, who leaves the most influence on human hearts across the globe. This is an overwhelming desire on the part of the [United States] to truly address a difficult issue” in improving relations between Muslims and the United States.

Samura Atallah, a 20-year-old Palestinian, said the section of the speech dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian peace process “was moderate and tailored to both sides; a child, whether Palestinian or Israeli, has every right to a decent life.”

Tarek Ali, a 44-year-old government driver in Cairo, said he did not expect Obama to go as far as he did in seeking to change the climate between Muslims and the United States. “He really seems to want to move forward,” Ali said, according to the Washington Post. Ahmed Abdullah, a communications worker in Baghdad, said it was the first time he had seen a U.S. president speaking so directly and plainly to Muslims.

One of the points the president emphasized in his speech was a desire to break down old stereotypes. “Just as Muslims do not fit a crude stereotype, America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire,” the president said.

In the Palestinian Territories, a Bethlehem mother, Raheeda Hamad, told Time magazine that she approved of the president’s message of a global partnership and the necessity for equal education for women. Nablus University political scientist and Islamic scholar Abdul Sattar Qasim said, “His speech was very close to the heart. He has a way of speaking directly to the people, something other leaders have forgotten.”

U.S. Strategy to Reduce Drug Trafficking Across Southwest Border

Will increase coordination, information-sharing to stem drug, weapon flow

U.S. Department of Justice
Press Release
Friday, June 5, 2009

OBAMA ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES NATIONAL STRATEGY TO REDUCE DRUG TRAFFICKING AND FLOW OF BULK CASH AND WEAPONS ACROSS SOUTHWEST BORDER

Albuquerque, N.M. – Today, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, U.S. Department of Homeland Secretary Janet Napolitano, and Director of National Drug Control Policy Gil Kerlikowske released President Obama’s strategy to stem the flow of illegal drugs and their illicit proceeds across the Southwest border and reduce associated crime and violence in the region.

The National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy directs federal agencies to increase coordination and information sharing with state and local law enforcement agencies, intensifies national efforts to interdict the southbound flow of weapons and bulk currency, and calls for continued close collaboration with the Government of

Mexico in their efforts against the drug cartels. The strategy is an important component of the Administration's national drug control policy and complements the Administration's comprehensive efforts to respond to threats along the border.

"Drug trafficking cartels spread violence and lawlessness throughout our border region and reach into all of our communities, large and small," said Attorney General Holder. "By focusing on increased cooperation between the U.S. and Mexican governments as well as enhanced communication within U.S. law enforcement agencies, the National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy we introduce today provides an effective way forward that will crack down on cartels and make our country safer."

"The President's counternarcotics strategy will play a critical role in our efforts to stop cross-border drug trafficking and violence," said Secretary Napolitano. "The plan calls for tougher inspections, more enforcement personnel and close coordination with our partners in Mexico as we work across Federal, State and local governments to achieve safety and security in our communities. Together, we will continue to reduce the flow of illegal drugs across the Southwest border and ensure that those who ignore our laws are prosecuted."

"Under President Obama's leadership we have designed a new plan to pull together the capabilities not only of Federal agencies, but also state, local, and tribal law enforcement officials," said Director Kerlikowske. "This new plan, combined with the dedicated efforts of the Government of Mexico, creates a unique opportunity to make real headway on the drug threat. At the same time, we are renewing our commitment to reduce the demand for drugs in the United States, which will support this effort. The National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy will improve the safety of communities on the border and throughout our Nation."

National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy Objectives:

1. Enhance intelligence capabilities associated with the Southwest border.
2. Interdict drugs, drug proceeds, and associated instruments of violence at the ports of entry, between the ports of entry, and in the air and maritime domains along the Southwest border.
3. Ensure the prosecution of all significant drug trafficking, money laundering, bulk currency and weapons

smuggling/trafficking cases.

4. Disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations.
5. Enhance counterdrug technologies for drug detection and interdiction along the Southwest border.
6. Enhance U.S.-Mexico cooperation regarding joint counterdrug efforts.

The Director of National Drug Control Policy will oversee the implementation of the strategy, in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement, and the Department of Justice, Office of the Deputy Attorney General. The Director will also ensure that the strategy is coordinated with other border related efforts, including the Merida Initiative, led by the State Department, and the Department of Homeland Security's Southwest border operations plan.

Iraqi Girls to Expand Basketball Skills Through Visitors Program

State partners with sports organizations to host delegation of players

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
June 5, 2009

MEDIA NOTE

Iraqi Girls Seek to Expand Basketball Skills Through Sports Visitor Program

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) SportsUnited office, in partnership with Global Sports Partners/Sport4Peace, the University of Tennessee and the National Basketball Association, is hosting a delegation of basketball-playing girls and their coaches from Iraq. They are visiting Washington, DC and Knoxville, Tennessee from June 3-18 to experience women's basketball in the United States. The ten girls, ages 14-16, and two female coaches are from Sulaymaniya, Erbil, and Baghdad.

This Sports Visitor program is designed to teach the girls new basketball skills and introduce them to sports in America, through visits and clinics at high schools, clubs, and universities. In addition, the program will provide guidance about nutrition, strength and conditioning, and team building. The girls will have the opportunity to learn about the development of women's sports, including Title

IX. In Washington they will attend a Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) game, the Washington Mystics vs. the Atlanta Dream, featuring the best women basketball players from America and around the world. Basketball is the fastest growing sport in the Middle East, and this group is committed to learning more about the game and taking that knowledge back to their teammates in Iraq.

After their time in Washington, the girls and their coaches will visit the basketball camps of the all-time winningest basketball coach in NCAA history, Pat Summitt, at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. They will have the opportunity to interact with girls their own age, learn about basketball, and experience life in Tennessee, including hiking in the Smoky Mountains.

(Preceding items distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://america.gov>)