

Obama to Africa: We Don't Do Infrastructure

The following statement was distributed by Lawrence Freeman at the Aug. 4-6 U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit.

Aug. 3—Speaking at the Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C. July 31, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, made it clear that the United States, as a matter of policy, will not build infrastructure in Africa. She stated that the purpose of President Obama's U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit was to reaffirm the U.S. partnership and friendship with Africa for 50 years, not give out billion-dollar goodies. She said other countries can build infrastructure, but warned Africa to be cautious in their relations with other economic powers.

Without infrastructure there will be no economic development in Africa, which has the largest infrastruc-

ture deficit per capita and per square kilometer of any continent. The spreading lethal Ebola virus is itself a marker of the failure to develop healthy economies in Africa. The Ebola outbreak in West Africa is appropriately threatening to become the number one concern at the African Summit. Energy is crucial and indispensable for the development of any country, which is why President Obama's signature policy—Power Africa—is such chicanery.

Africa Needs Electrification

With between 550 and 600 million Africans living in sub-Saharan Africa having no access to electricity—over 50% of the population living in the dark—President Obama's so-called signature policy for Africa, his “Powerless Africa” program, is either an outright fraud, a cruel joke, or done by someone who doesn't know how to simply add and divide. The initiative to generate 8-10,000 megawatts of power over five years, divided among several countries—Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Kenya—to provide electricity to 20 million additional users, will not double the access to electricity. Presently, Sub-Saharan Africa has about 400-450 million users of electricity, albeit at very low watts per capita. However, this did not prevent President Obama from making false claims of “doubling” twice when he spoke in South Africa in 2013, which his administration has repeated ever since.

The Sub-Saharan African continent generates the least amount of electricity in the world, and has the lowest number of watts per capita as well. Globally the world generates about 5,200 gigawatts (GW) of electricity—that is, 5,200 billion watts of power. Sub-Saharan Africa consumes about 70,000 megawatts (MW)—that is 70,000 million watts of power, which gives the Subcontinent less than 1.5% of the world's total. Is it any wonder why it is called the “Dark Continent?” Even if we doubled or tripled Obama's “Powerless Africa” program every five years, Africa would still be in the dark. One blogger estimated that if Africa's total electrical power were shared equally, each household would be able to power one light bulb per day, per person, for 3.5 hours, Obama's program would add 18 minutes to each light bulb.

Take the case of Nigeria. At best, Nigeria generates 4,000 MW of power, not counting several thousands more MW produced by costly household diesel generators, which doesn't change the country's massive

energy deficit. With 177 million people, and at best, 4,000 MW of power, Nigerians average less than 25 watts of energy per capita, and some estimates are as low as 12 watts per capita. For Nigeria to enjoy American standard of energy consumption of 1,400 watts per capita, which they deserve, Nigeria would require 248,000 MW or 248 GW—approximately 60 times its current power generation. And Nigeria's population is expected to increase to 250 million in the next 20 years, thus requiring even more power. Obama's “Powerless Africa,” if and when completed, will provide Nigeria with a mere 2,000 MW in five years.

For all of sub-Saharan Africa's nearly 1 billion people to enjoy an American standard would require 1,400,000 MW or 1,400 GW of electrical power. This can only be accomplished with nuclear power, which is the most efficient, cost effective, and most powerful in terms of its energy-flux density.³ That is why South Africa's commitment to build six nuclear power plants, with 9,600 MW of capacity, is exciting for all of Africa. South Africa, which already has the highest energy per capita on the Subcontinent, will be generating an equivalent amount of energy to Obama's total “Powerless Africa,” and it will be far more productive than solar energy and wind farms. It doesn't matter that they are renewable; they are too inefficient, too low energy-flux density to power a modern agricultural-industrial economy. Russia has already discussed with South Africa a proposal to build and provide favorable financing for the construction of these nuclear plants.

With nuclear energy, and then fusion energy, Africa will have the energy-flux density to power transportation, to power pumping for irrigation, to construct new waterways, and nuclear power plants, with its energy and high-temperature steam ideal for desalination. Why not start building the equivalent of a new Nile River with desalinated water? We know Egypt and the Horn of Africa need it. With this type of high energy-flux-density program, the people of Africa can finally be freed from the deplorable conditions of life caused by a lack of energy, food, clean water, and sanitation.

Not surprisingly, of the 72 nuclear plants currently under construction worldwide, 47 of them—65%—are in BRICS countries.

3. Energy-flux density is the organization and power/heat intensity of a form of energy to accomplish work.