

RELEASE IN FULL

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Subject: Fw: Senator Webb Press Comments read-out

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Sent: Sun Aug 16 11:41:46 2009
Subject: Senator Webb Press Comments read-out

Colleagues,

FYI, following is a read-out of Senator Webb's comments to the press August 16 in Bangkok.

- Senator Webb first delivered a prepared statement, in which he said his visit to Burma had three purposes:
 - 1) to appeal for Yettaw's deportation;
 - 2) to visit ASSK;
 - 3) to ask to the Burmese leadership to end her house arrest.
- The Senator summarized the basis of his humanitarian appeal, noting Yettaw's health and stating that the [trespassing] incident was regrettable but not mean-spirited.
- With ASSK, he said he had discussed elections and sanctions issues, but declined to characterize the content of their conversation.
- With the leadership, he said he had raised a wide range of issues, including elections. He conveyed to the generals that it would be hard for the world to view the Burmese elections as free and fair without the participation of ASSK and her supporters. Asked whether free and fair elections are possible given the Burmese constitution's structure, Webb said the constitution does not necessarily constrain elections.
- Senator Webb explained he was not a U.S. Government envoy. **Asked whether his visit would trigger a review of U.S. Burma policy, the Senator responded that Secretary Clinton had already called for a review and that he would discuss his visit with the Secretary.**
- Asked why he was received by the Burmese leadership while the UN Secretary General was not, the Senator referred to his 18-year record of working on Southeast Asia issues and his record in Vietnam. He did not characterize his own position on sanctions. With respect to human rights groups' fear that his visit would lend legitimacy the regime, Webb firmly restated his qualifications and record.
- The Senator indicated that he viewed this as a possible opening for progress, but did not make any indications or suggestions on next steps.

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