

PRESS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE



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TEXT OF LETTER
FROM THE HONORABLE HENRY A. KISSINGER
SECRETARY OF STATE
TO HIS EXCELLENCY WILLIAM A. ETEKI MBOUMOUA
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR AFRICAN UNITY
REGARDING THE NOMINATION OF NATHANIEL DAVIS
AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS

Dear Mr. Secretary General:

The text of the "Consensus Resolution" of the OAU Council of Ministers commenting upon the nomination by the President of the United States of Nathaniel Davis to the important position of Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs has been brought to my attention by press accounts.

The selection of senior officials for posts in the United States Government is a function of American sovereignty. Unlike the established procedures for accrediting Ambassadors for whom agreement is sought, the selection of Assistant Secretaries of State remains a purely internal, domestic concern. The United States Government would never comment publicly upon the choices of other sovereign governments in filling any of their public offices. Under commonly accepted principles of international decency it has the right to expect the same of other governments, particularly of those whom it has regarded as friends. You will understand, Mr. Secretary General, the depth of my dismay in learning from the press of this unprecedented and harmful act of the Council.

Ambassador Davis, as you know, is a brilliant career officer in our Foreign Service. President Ford and I repose particular trust and confidence in him. Indeed, he has served with great distinction in high posts in our public service under Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon as Deputy Associate Director of the Peace Corps, Minister to Bulgaria, Ambassador to Guatemala, Ambassador to Chile and as Director General of the Foreign Service. He is not yet fifty years old. The



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post to which he has been nominated by the President is one to which we attach very great importance. Mr. Davis was selected in order to give new impetus and inspiration to our African policy. I have full confidence in his ability to fill this vital position with distinction. I am certain that the African statesmen with whom he will be dealing will learn to respect him as I do.

I cannot believe, Mr. Secretary General, that the members of the Council were aware that Ambassador Davis, while serving in the Peace Corps under President Kennedy, traveled widely as Africa, that he was a marshal in the great 1963 Civil Rights March in Washington led by Dr. Martin Luther King, that he has served for periods totaling five years as an Assistant Professor at Washington's leading black institution, Howard University, and that he has devoted many years of his spare time as a volunteer worker among the disadvantaged black citizens of Washington. I am truly saddened to learn of the manner in which the Council has besmirched the reputation of this outstanding man who was selected precisely because we believed that he possessed the breadth of view and the compassionate understanding for a new approach to this vital position. To suggest that such a man has a mission to "destabilize" Africa, a continent with which we have enjoyed excellent relations and in whose development it is our policy to assist is unacceptable and offensive. (I might also add that the word "destablize" is one coined by a newspaper reporter, not one ever used by any U. S. official to describe our activities in any country.)

I would ask you to communicate to the African heads of State at the earliest possible moment the text of this message in order that the regret felt in the United States over this unfortunate and unfair action is well understood.

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