**ADDRESS TO THE NATION, BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDO, ON THE “US-GHANA MILITARY CO-OPERATION AGREEMENT”, ON THURSDAY, 5TH APRIL, 2018.**

Fellow Ghanaians, I have come into your homes this evening to talk about a matter that has generated a lot of heat in our country these past days.

Last week, at the height of the furore triggered by the US-Ghana Military Co-operation Agreement, a good friend of mine came to caution me on what he called the “hazards of this democracy thing”. He told me, just in case I needed reminding that my predecessor as President, who had also been democratically elected, had chosen to avoid any possible controversy by signing and keeping secret some agreements. So, why did I not follow this precedent, instead of exposing the nation to all the hazards of the past few days?

My friend, no doubt, had a point. Indeed, I acknowledge that there are many very well-meaning citizens who would have preferred the peaceful process of agreements reached behind closed doors, to the furore of the past few days. Yet, far from being daunted, I take what has happened not to be symptomatic of the hazards of democracy, but a show of the strength of democracy in action. We are seeing being displayed before our very eyes, not the triumph of disorder, but the value of openness in governance, and of the need, the crucial need, for the people to be fully and accurately informed.

You cannot claim to believe in democracy unless you have faith in the people, faith in their inherent goodness, faith in their capacity to make the right decisions, given the right information. It is this faith in the people that has shaped my entire political career, and it is this faith that propels me to lead an open and transparent government.

I was fully aware of how such agreements had been handled in earlier administrations, but I decided that, under my watch, any such agreements should be subject to the appropriate scrutiny of the people’s representatives in Parliament, in consonance with the requirements of accountable governance and the teachings of the Constitution. After all, you, the Ghanaian people, had voted massively for change; therefore, there was simply no way my government would ever keep hidden from you, the people, agreements of such a nature. I believe that the fall-out from this decision only shows the growing maturation of our democracy.

But for this decision to be open about this agreement, how else would we, the people of Ghana, have ever known that, for several decades, Ghana has had defence and security co-operation collaborations with the United States of America? How else would we have known that, in some instances, we have provided them with facilities for the movement of personnel and equipment to help some of our neighbours who were facing security and health challenges?

And how else would we have exposed the unspeakable hypocrisy of the fraternity of some frontline politicians, who make a habit of running with the hares and hunting with the hounds, who secretly wallow in the largesse of the United States of America, whilst, at the same time, promote anti-American sentiments to a populist constituency? Submitting this Agreement to open scrutiny now allows us to clear the unhealthy fog that has clouded our relations with the United States of America.

The conduct of Ghana’s foreign policy and its relations with the nations of the world has, happily, been, traditionally, above the passions of partisan politics. Allowing for the normal differences of approach, which will sometimes occur, our foreign policy has been consistently bi-partisan, and no successor government has found the need to tamper with any Agreement of a non-commercial nature, entered into by its predecessor. We respect the age-old norms of international diplomacy that, when a country has accorded concessions and privileges to another, these are not removed or altered by a successor government, unless, firstly, the conditions under which they were granted have been reversed; or, secondly, there is proven evidence of abuse.

My Government came to know that Ghana had entered into a Co-operation Agreement with the United States of America, in 1998, 2000, and under the government of my predecessor in 2015. We were satisfied that the conditions which necessitated the Agreement, namely the creeping threat to the peace of the region, had not disappeared. If anything, the threat had increased and, therefore, the need had arisen for continuing with our co-operation.

No suggestion had ever been made that the United States of America had abused any of the privileges or concessions granted under any of these agreements, and it would, thus, have been deemed an unfriendly act to attempt to deny them any concession granted them under those agreements.

Fellow Ghanaians, above everything else, the crux of the matter is this. Ghana has built a formidable reputation for its contribution to peace-keeping around the world. Although these peace-keeping operations have always been under the aegis of the United Nations, no one doubts the fact that they have been made possible by the contributions largely of the United States of America. The Co-operation Agreement, which has subsisted, which we have approved, can only enhance the global effort to preserve the peace in our region.

It is important also to state that the conditions of the Agreement mirror closely the conditions under which Ghana participates in peace-keeping operations under the United Nations. When our troops go on most peacekeeping duties, they do not carry their national passports, they carry their military identity.

Quite apart from how this Agreement involves the military as an institution, it is worth pointing out that, virtually since independence, Ghana has had very fruitful relations with a range of foreign embassies and major international institutions. These include the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank, the International Finance Corporation, amongst others. All these agencies enjoy similar conditions as those which the Co-operation Agreement offers to the US military here.

No one has dared suggest that granting these foreign embassies and international institutions these concessions constitute an attack on the sovereignty of Ghana. Nor has anyone also felt that the concessions have in any way worked against the interests of Ghana. Indeed, I have no doubt that it would be the general consensus of all well-informed Ghanaians that this nation has benefitted significantly from the presence and activities of these institutions over the past decades.

It is clear to me that, if the people of Ghana knew the conditions under which foreign embassies and our friendly international institutions operate in Ghana, nobody would have been surprised that a Defence Cooperation Agreement would make such provisions. Such knowledge would have spared many citizens the genuine anxiety and concern they have felt about the Agreement. It is my firm belief that the case for openness and transparency in our governance has been clearly demonstrated, and the argument conclusively settled by these events.

But we have to take issue with the front-line politicians who have sought to mislead the people in this blatant manner, and those who, for mischievous purposes, leaked the document destined for the scrutiny of Parliament prematurely to a section of the media, who then went on to describe it as a “secret document”. How could a document intended for the consideration of Parliament be described as a “secret document”? How could anyone who has been in government and run the administration of this nation feign ignorance of the conditions under which Ghanaian troops undertake peace-keeping operations, or the conditions under which our country has collaborated with major international institutions? It is difficult to understand that such people, knowing what they do know, would set about so blatantly to confuse people, and go as far as calling for the overthrow of our democracy? A democracy that has become the beacon of good governance in Africa? A democracy that has survived for a quarter of a century and encompassed even the most irresponsible episodes of ill governance, in a state of unity and stability? A democracy that has provided the framework for systematic developments in our social and economic welfare, and assured us of the longest, uninterrupted period of stable constitutional governance in our history?

Surely, this is the kind of cynical manipulation by reckless self-seekers, which, in the fullness of time, the people of Ghana will acknowledge and condemn. And I am sure that as the facts become clear and widely available, and as the people come to terms with the evidence, they will reject the falsehood and deliberate attempts to destabilize our peaceful country. Truth is sacrosanct.

So let me state with the clearest affirmation that Ghana has not offered a military base, and will not offer a military base to the United States of America. Indeed, the United States of America has not made any request for such consideration and, consistent with our established foreign policy, we will not consider any such request. However, in consideration of the realities of our circumstances and the challenges to peace in our region in our time, we have deemed it prudent to continue the Co-operation Agreement with the United States of America. It is our firm belief that the Agreement will help enhance our defence capability, and offer an important layer of support in our common effort to protect the peace in our region.

Fellow Ghanaians, let me conclude by saying how outraged I am by the defamatory comments from my political opponents, some of whose patriotism can be so easily questioned, that the sovereignty of this country has been sold by my government and myself. I will never be the President that will compromise or sell the sovereignty of our country. I respect deeply the memory of the great patriots whose sacrifice and toil brought about our independence and freedom. I have stood with you, the Ghanaian people, all my adult life, fighting for our individual and collective rights. Everything I have done, since assuming the great honour and privilege of serving you as President of the Republic, demonstrates that I remain focused on building a self-reliant, free, prosperous Ghana, which will be able to make her own unique contribution to the growth and development of Africa and the world.

Let us concentrate and spend our energies on working together to achieve that goal of a happy and prosperous Ghana, and reject the hypocrisy of the naysayers who led our country into bankruptcy and the worse economic record of modern Ghanaian history. Let us rise above them, and build the Ghana of our destiny, the land of freedom, justice, progress and prosperity.

May God bless us all, and our homeland Ghana, and make her great and strong. I thank you for your attention. Good night.