

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks Following a Meeting With Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and the Joint Chiefs of Staff

January 28, 2009

Well, sorry we're running a little bit late. I want to, first of all, thank all the men and women in uniform who are represented here. They are the best that this country has to offer. And the first thing that I said to the Joint Chiefs in this meeting was how grateful we are for their service. The sacrifices that they and their families make are what are responsible for our freedoms that sometimes we take for granted.

And as Commander in Chief, one of my principal goals during my Presidency is going to be to make sure that they have the resources and the support that they need to carry out the critical missions that keep our Nation safe each and every day.

I had a wonderful discussion with the Joint Chiefs—we kind of lost track of time—about a range of issues facing our military as well as the threats that face this Nation, both short term and long term. We had discussions about Iraq as well as Afghanistan. We talked about some of the broader global risks that may arise and the kind of planning and coordination that's going to be required between our military and our civilian forces in order to accomplish our long-term national security objectives.

We also talked about making sure that the health of our force is always in our sights. And I know that all the Chiefs that are represented here, as well as Secretary Gates, are constantly thinking about what we need to do to make sure that people who are in uniform for the United States are getting the kinds of support that they need, and that their families are getting the support that they need. And that's something that I'm absolutely committed to, and I know that Vice President Biden is as well.

We're going to have some difficult decisions that we're going to have to make surrounding Iraq and Afghanistan, most immediately. Obviously, our efforts to continue to go after extremist organizations that would do harm to the homeland is uppermost on our minds. I have every confidence that our military is going to do their job, and I intend to make sure that the civilian side of the ledger does its job to support what they are doing.

We have, for a long time, put enormous pressure on our military to carry out a whole set of missions, sometimes not with the sort of strategic support and the use of all aspects of American power to make sure that they're not carrying the full load. And that's something that I spoke with the Chiefs about and that I intend to change as President of the United States.

So again, my first message was to say thank you. And in addition, it's to say that you—all of you who are serving in the United States Armed Forces are going to have my full support, and one of my duties as President is going to be to make sure that you have what you need to accomplish your missions, and we are grateful to you.

So, all right; thank you, guys. I'm going to shake some more hands now.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:06 p.m. at the Pentagon.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Defense Department :: Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, meeting.

Locations: Arlington, VA.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Gates, Robert M.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces : Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Armed Forces, U.S. : Military families; Armed Forces, U.S. : Service members :: Service and dedication; Defense and national security : War on terror; Defense and national security : War on terror; Defense, Department of : Joint Chiefs of Staff, meeting; Defense, Department of : Secretary; Iraq : U.S. military forces : Deployment.

DCPD Number: DCPD200900031.