

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010*

**Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Jacob Zuma of South Africa**  
*April 11, 2010*

*President Obama.* Well, good afternoon, everybody. I want to officially welcome the South African delegation to this nuclear summit and thank President Zuma for his extraordinary leadership.

So far today I've already met with Prime Minister Singh of India, as well as the President of Kazakhstan, and now we are meeting with the President of South Africa. I'll be meeting with the Prime Minister of Pakistan after this meeting.

The central focus of this nuclear summit is the fact that the single biggest threat to U.S. security, both short term, medium term and long term, would be the possibility of a terrorist organization obtaining a nuclear weapon. This is something that could change the security landscape in this country and around the world for years to come. If there was ever a detonation in New York City or London or Johannesburg, the ramifications economically, politically, and from a security perspective would be devastating. And we know that organizations like Al Qaida are in the process of trying to secure a nuclear weapon, or other weapons of mass destruction, and they have no compunction at using them.

Unfortunately, we have a situation in which there is a lot of loose nuclear material around the world. And so the central focus goal of this summit is getting the international community on a path in which we are locking down that nuclear material in a very specific time frame with a specific work plan. And one of the things that I'm very pleased about is, is that countries have embraced this goal, and they're coming to this summit not just talking about general statements of support, but rather with very specific approaches to how we can solve this profound international problem.

I wanted to especially single out South Africa, because South Africa is singular in having had a nuclear weapons program, had moved forward on it, and then decided this was not the right path; dismantled it, and has been a strong, effective leader in the international community around nonproliferation issues ever since.

And so South Africa has special standing in being a moral leader on this issue. And I wanted to publicly compliment President Zuma, his administration for the leadership they've shown. And we are looking forward toward the possibility of them helping to guide other countries down a similar direction of nonproliferation.

But I feel very good at this stage, in the degree of commitment and a sense of urgency that I've seen from the world leaders so far on this issue. We think we can make enormous progress on this. And this then becomes part and parcel of the broader focus that we've had over the last several weeks, with the signing of the START Treaty between the United States and Russia, reducing our nuclear stockpiles; a Nuclear Posture Review that has been released that sends a clear signal that those who abide by the nonproliferation treaties will have negative assurances, meaning that if they're abiding by their obligations, then they will not be targeted for potential nuclear weapons. And this then becomes a central part of the process, but is probably the most urgent one and one that we're most concerned with in the short term.

So, thank you again, Mr. President, for your participation and your leadership.

*President Zuma.* Thank you very much.

*President Obama.* Thank you.

All right. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:19 p.m. at the Blair House. In his remarks, he referred to President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan; and Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani of Pakistan.

*Categories:* Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : South Africa, President Zuma.

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*Names:* Gilani, Syed Yousuf Raza; Nazarbayev, Nursultan; Singh, Manmohan; Zuma, Jacob.

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