

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Petr Necas of the Czech Republic and an Exchange With Reporters

October 27, 2011

President Obama. I want to extend a heartfelt welcome to Prime Minister Necas and his delegation. This gives me a chance to return the hospitality that the Czech people have provided me on the two occasions that I've had an opportunity to visit. I've always been someone who not only wanted to visit, but—wanted to visit the Czech Republic, but also because I come from Chicago—we've got a lot of people who are originally from the Czech Republic, and they've made enormous contributions to our country as well.

Let me say first at the top, the Prime Minister just came from Brussels, where he was part of the negotiations around the euro zone crisis. I'm glad to see that progress was made in the recent meetings. I think it is an important first step. We've seen that, although it's very complicated, obviously the countries of the euro zone and all of Europe are committed to the European project and are intent on making sure that it continues.

So we've seen that the message that they are going to deal with this in a serious way has calmed markets all around the world. It will help lay the predicate for long-term economic growth not only in Europe, but around the world. The key now is to make sure that it is implemented fully and decisively, and I have great confidence in the European leadership to make that happen.

With respect to the relationship between the United States and the Czech Republic, it continues to be strong. The Czech Republic is one of our greatest allies and has provided the kind of support and cooperation on both security and nonsecurity issues that is a mark of a true ally. As a fellow NATO member, we have consistently reaffirmed our Article 5 commitment that says that an attack on any one of us is an attack on all of us and that we have to make sure that we continue to have the kind of strong mutual defense posture that's required. And the Czech Republic has reflected that commitment in the extraordinary efforts it has made in Afghanistan, for which we are deeply appreciative.

I will tell you that when you talk to American commanders in Afghanistan and you ask them who are some of our best and most effective partners, they consistently say the Czech Republic. And so we are very grateful for their contributions, and we are going to be working and collaborating with them as we move into a transition process where we increasingly make sure that Afghans are taking the security lead in their country.

We also are going to have an opportunity to discuss a range of economic and commercial ties and issues. We want to continue to deepen our relationship around research and development, around civil nuclear power, around how we can strengthen trade between our two countries. And so overall, I think it's fair to say that, although the relationship between the United States and the Czech Republic economically is very strong, it can always be stronger. And we're going to look for additional opportunities for collaboration.

Finally, let me just say that the Czechs continue to inspire the world with their own transition from being behind the Iron Curtain to freedom and democracy. And so their strong stance on issues of human rights and democracy and freedom around the world is extraordinarily important. And I know the Prime Minister is committed to making sure that the

Czech Republic continues to send a signal around the world, whether it's in the wake of the Arab Spring or other countries where freedom and democracy have not yet been achieved, that they are able to continue to set a great example and provide the kind of leadership and technical assistance that's so important for many of these countries.

So overall, Mr. Prime Minister, I want to thank you for your leadership not only in our bilateral relations, but the Czech Republic's leadership in many multilateral fora. We want to welcome you and I hope that you enjoy your stay here.

Prime Minister Necas. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President, for your kind words. Thank you for your hospitality you have shown to me and to my delegation.

We are indeed allies in numerous endeavors in Europe and around the world. We are together in Afghanistan. We are ready to work together on the process of transition in this country.

We are preparing a NATO summit in Chicago, in Mr. President's hometown, and also, a city that has many Czech connections.

It will be necessary to create a framework for keeping our defense capability in the current economical situation. I would like to discuss the issue of the Czech project to create a special helicopter pilot training center of excellence, as a part of a smart defense initiative within NATO.

We would like to discuss, of course, the economical situation, the situation on both sides of the Atlantic, vis-a-vis the current crisis of euro zone, and last but not least, the promotion of human rights and democracy around the world.

We would like to discuss our participation within Open Government Partnership initiative and, of course, the discussion concerning center for civil nuclear cooperation, because we do appreciate your strong leadership, your announcement that you'd like to have a vision of a world without nuclear weapons that was announced in Prague.

So thank you for your hospitality.

President Obama. Welcome. Thank you so much. Thank you everybody.

Europe's Economic Stabilization Efforts/U.S. National Economy

Q. Mr. President, do you think that the deal in Europe will help prevent another recession?

President Obama. There's no doubt that it's progress. And so the key now is to make sure that there's strong follow-up, strong execution of the plans that have been put forward. But I was very pleased to see that the leaders of Europe recognize that it is both in Europe's interest and the world's interest that the situation is stabilized. And I think they've made significant progress over the last week. And the key now is just to make sure that it drives forward in an effective way.

It will definitely have an impact on us here in the United States. If Europe is weak, if Europe is not growing, as our largest trading partner, that's going to have an impact on our businesses and our ability to create jobs here in the United States.

All right, thanks guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:21 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Czech Republic, Prime Minister Necas.

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