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Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Chicago, Illinois

May 20, 2012

President Obama. Well, I just want to not only welcome Secretary General Rasmussen to my hometown of Chicago—my understanding is he's already enjoyed some of the sights, and we were hearing about him jogging along the lake, appreciating the outstanding views and the skyline—but more importantly, I want to thank him for his extraordinary leadership.

Secretary General Rasmussen arrived in this post during one of most challenging times that NATO has faced. He has guided us through some very rocky times, and I think the results of this NATO summit are reflective of his extraordinary leadership.

At this summit, we anticipate not only ratifying the plan for moving forward in Afghanistan—a transition process that will bring the war to an end at the end of 2014 and put Afghans in the lead for their own security—but we're also going to be talking about the progress that we've made in expanding NATO's defense capabilities, ensuring that every NATO member has a stake and is involved and integrated in our mutual defense efforts.

And we're going to have an opportunity to talk about the partnerships that NATO has been able to set up with like-minded countries around the world and find ways that we can deepen and engage those partners to help to promote security and peace around the world.

All this has happened because of Secretary General Rasmussen's leadership. I'm very proud of the work that he's done. I think it's going to be reflected in the success of this summit. And on behalf of the American people, we want to say thank you.

Secretary General Rasmussen. Thank you very much. Mr. President, I would like to thank you very much for your strong leadership, for your dedication to our alliance. America has always been a source of strength and inspiration in NATO, and I'm very pleased that we can hold our 25th summit in your home city, Chicago.

Chicago has always been a place where Europeans and North Americans have come together. And now, we have come together to reaffirm the unbreakable bond between us.

I look very much forward to a successful summit, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have worked so hard to make this summit a success. And I would like to thank the people of Chicago for their great hospitality.

President Obama. All right. Thank you so much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:52 p.m. at McCormick Place convention center.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : North Atlantic Treaty Organization :: Secretary General Rasmussen .

Locations: Chicago, IL.

Names: Rasmussen, Anders Fogh.

Subjects: Afghanistan : Afghan military and security forces; Foreign policy, U.S. : Peace efforts, expansion; Illinois : President's visit; North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

DCPD Number: DCPD201200399.