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Remarks on the Resignation of Thomas E. Donilon as National Security Adviser, the Appointment of Susan E. Rice as National Security Adviser, and the Nomination of Samantha Power to be U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations

June 5, 2013

The President. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat. Well, good afternoon. It is a beautiful day, and it's good to see so many friends here.

Of all the jobs in government, leading my national security team is certainly one of the most demanding, if not the most demanding. And since the moment I took office, I've counted on the exceptional experience and insights of Tom Donilon. Nearly every day for the past several years, I've started each morning with Tom leading the Presidential daily brief, hundreds of times, a sweeping assessment of global developments and the most pressing challenges. As my National Security Adviser, his portfolio is literally the entire world.

He has definitely advanced our strategic foreign policy initiatives while at the same time having to respond to unexpected crises, and that happens just about every day. He's overseen and coordinated our entire national security team across the Government, a Herculean task. And it's nonstop, 24/7, 365 days a year.

Today I am wistful to announce that after more than 4 years of extraordinary service, Tom has decided to step aside at the beginning of July. And I am extraordinarily proud to announce my new National Security Adviser, our outstanding Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, as well as my nominee to replace Susan in New York, Samantha Power.

When I first asked Tom to join my team, I knew I was getting one of our Nation's premier foreign policy leaders, somebody with a deep sense of history and a keen understanding of our Nation's place in the world. He shared my view that in order to renew American leadership for the 21st century, we had to fundamentally rebalance our foreign policy. And more than that, he knew how we could do it.

See, Tom is that rare combination of the strategic and the tactical. He has a strategic sense of where we need to go, and he has a tactical sense of how to get there.

Moreover, Tom's work ethic is legendary. He began his public service in the Carter White House when he was just 22 years old, and somehow, he has been able to maintain the same drive and the same stamina and the same enthusiasm and reverence for serving in Government. He has helped shape every single national security policy of my Presidency, from forging a new national security strategy rooted in our economic strength here at home to ending the war in Iraq. Here at the White House, Tom oversaw the operation that led us to bin Laden. He's helped keep our transition on track as we wind down the war in Afghanistan.

At the same time, Tom has played a critical role as we've bolstered the enduring pillars of American power: strengthening our alliances from Europe to Asia, enhancing our relationship with key powers, and moving ahead with new trade agreements and energy partnerships. And from our tough sanctions on Iran to our unprecedented military and intelligence cooperation with Israel——

[*At this point, a baby in the audience cried out.*]

——it's true—[*laughter*]—from New START with Russia to deeper partnerships with emerging powers like India, to stronger ties with the Gulf States, Tom has been instrumental every step of the way.

I'm especially appreciative to Tom for helping us renew American leadership in the Asia-Pacific, where so much of our future security and prosperity will be shaped. He has worked tirelessly to forge a constructive relationship with China that advances our interests and our values. And I'm grateful that Tom will be joining me as I meet with President Xi of China this week.

And finally, Tom, I am personally grateful for your advice, for your counsel, and most of all, for your friendship. Whenever we sit down together—whether it's in the Oval Office or the Situation Room—I do so knowing that you have led a rigorous process, that you've challenged assumptions, that you've asked the tough questions, that you've led an incredibly hard-working national security staff, and presented me with a range of options to advance our national interests. A President can't ask for anything more than that, and this is a testament to your incredible professionalism, but also your deep love of country.

I know that this relentless pace has meant sacrifices for your family: for Cathy, who is here, Dr. Biden's former Chief of Staff, who I was proud to nominate as our new Global Ambassador for Women; and for Tom and Cathy's wonderful children Sarah and Teddy. So today I want to publicly thank all the Donilons for their abiding commitment to public service that runs through the family.

You've been with me every step of the way these past 4 years, and the American people owe you an enormous debt of gratitude for everything that you've done. You've helped to restore our Nation's prestige and standing in the world. You've positioned us well to continue to lead in the years ahead. I think that Tom Donilon has been one of the most effective National Security Advisers our country has ever had, and he's done so without a lot of fanfare and a lot of fuss. So, Tom, on behalf of us all, thank you for your extraordinary service.

Now, I am proud that this work will be carried on by another exemplary public servant, Ambassador Susan Rice. Susan was a trusted adviser during my first campaign for President. She helped to build my foreign policy team and lead our diplomacy at the United Nations in my first term. I'm absolutely thrilled that she'll be back at my side, leading my national security team in my second term.

With her background as a scholar, Susan understands that there is no substitute for American leadership. She is at once passionate and pragmatic. I think everybody understands Susan is a fierce champion for justice and human dignity, but she's also mindful that we have to exercise our power wisely and deliberately.

Having served on the National Security Council staff herself, she knows how to bring people together around a common policy and then push it through to completion so that we're making a difference where it matters most, here in the country that we've pledged to defend and in the daily lives of people we're trying to help around the world.

Having served as an Assistant Secretary of State, she knows our policies are stronger when we harness the views and talents of people across Government. So Susan's the consummate public servant: a patriot who puts her country first. She is fearless; she is tough. She has a great tennis game and a pretty good basketball game. [*Laughter*] Her brother is here, who I play with occasionally, and it runs in the family, throwing the occasional elbow—[*laughter*]—but hitting the big shot.

As our Ambassador to the U.N., Susan has been a tireless advocate in advancing our interests. She has reinvigorated American diplomacy in New York. She's helped to put in place tough sanctions on Iran and North Korea. She has defended Israel. She has stood up for innocent civilians from Libya to Cote d'Ivoire. She has supported an independent South Sudan. She has raised her voice for human rights, including women's rights.

Put simply, Susan exemplifies the finest tradition of American diplomacy and leadership. So thank you, Susan, for being willing to take on this next assignment. I'm absolutely confident that you're going to hit the ground running. And I know that after years of commuting to New York while Ian, Jake, and Maris stayed here in Washington, you will be the first person ever in this job who will see their family more by taking the National Security Adviser's job.

Now, normally I'd be worried about losing such an extraordinary person up at the United Nations and be trying to figure out, how are we ever going to replace her? But fortunately, I'm confident we've got an experienced, effective, and energetic U.N. Ambassador-in-waiting in Samantha Power.

Samantha first came to work for me in 2005 shortly after I became a United States Senator, as one of our country's leading journalists; I think she won the Pulitzer Prize at the age of 15 or 16. One of our foremost thinkers on foreign policy, she showed us that the international community has a moral responsibility and a profound interest in resolving conflicts and defending human dignity.

As a senior member of my national security team, she has been a relentless advocate for American interests and values, building partnerships on behalf of democracy and human rights, fighting the scourge of anti-Semitism, and combating human trafficking. To those who care deeply about America's engagement and indispensable leadership in the world, you will find no stronger advocate for that cause than Samantha.

And over the last 4 years, Samantha's worked hand in glove with Susan in her role because Samantha has been the lead White House staffer on issues related to the United Nations. And I'm fully confident she will be ready on day one to lead our mission in New York, while continuing to be an indispensable member of my national security team.

She knows the U.N.'s strengths. She knows its weaknesses. She knows that American interests are advanced when we can rally the world to our side. And she knows that we have to stand up for the things that we believe in. And to ensure that we have the principled leadership we need at the United Nations, I would strongly urge the Senate to confirm her without delay.

So, Samantha, thank you to Cass and you and Declan and Rian, for continuing to serve our country.

This team of people has been extraordinarily dedicated to America. They have made America safer. They have made America's values live in corners of the world that are crying out for our support and our leadership. I could not be prouder of these three individuals, not only their intelligence, not only their savvy, but their integrity and their heart.

And I'm very, very proud to have had the privilege of working with Tom. I'm very proud that I'll continue to have the privilege of working with Samantha and with Susan.

So with that, I'd invite Tom to say a few words. Tom.

National Security Adviser Donilon. Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned the many hours that we've worked together in the Situation Room, put together here by John Kennedy and without windows.

The President. No windows.

National Security Adviser Donilon. No windows. So I would first like to thank you for this rare opportunity to be outside and experience the natural light. [*Laughter*]

[*Outgoing National Security Adviser Donilon, Ambassador Rice, and Ambassador-designate Power each made brief remarks. The President continued his remarks as follows.*]

The President. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:17 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Catherine M. Russell, wife of outgoing National Security Adviser Donilon; Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden; E. John Rice, Jr., brother, Ian O. Cameron, husband, and Jake and Maris Rice-Cameron, children, of Ambassador Rice; Cass R. Sunstein, husband of Samantha Power, Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs, National Security Council, and their daughter Rian Power-Sunstein; and Declan Sunstein, son of Cass R. Sunstein. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of outgoing National Security Adviser Donilon, Ambassador Rice, and Ambassador-designate Power.

Categories: Appointments and Nominations : National Security Adviser, appointment, remarks*;* Appointments and Nominations : U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, nomination, remarks*;* Resignations and Retirements : National Security Adviser, resignation, remarks.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Jill T.; Cameron, Ian O.; Carter, James E., Jr.; Donilon, Sarah; Donilon, Teddy; Donilon, Thomas E.; Carter, James E., Jr.; Power, Samantha; Power-Sunstein, Rian; Rice, E. John, Jr.; Rice, Susan E.; Rice-Cameron, Jake; Rice-Cameron, Maris; Russell, Catherine M.; Sunstein, Cass R.; Sunstein, Declan; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; China : President; Foreign policy, U.S. : Civil and human rights, promotion efforts; Foreign policy, U.S. : Diplomatic efforts, expansion; State, Department of : Global Women's Issues, Ambassador at Large ; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; United Nations : U.S. Permanent Representative; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Security Adviser, National.

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