

Remarks Following a Meeting With Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait

September 13, 2013

President Obama. It's a great pleasure to welcome our friend, the Amir of Kuwait, to the Oval Office. Kuwait is one of our most important partners in the region, and we have a very strong bilateral defense agreement, as well as working together on a whole range of economic and social and security issues.

We had the opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues. Obviously, at the top of the list was the situation in Syria. Our two countries are in agreement that the use of chemical weapons that we saw in Syria was a criminal act and that it is absolutely important for the international community to respond in not only deterring repeated use of chemical weapons, but hopefully, getting those chemical weapons outside of Syria.

I shared with the Amir my hope that the negotiations that are currently taking place between Secretary of State Kerry and Foreign Minister Lavrov in Geneva bear fruit. But I repeated what I've said publicly, which is that any agreement needs to be verifiable and enforceable. And we agreed that, ultimately, what's needed for the underlying conflict is a political settlement that allows ordinary Syrians to get back to their homes, to rebuild, and to relieve the enormous suffering that's taking place. And I wanted to express our appreciation to the Kuwaiti people for the enormous humanitarian support that they've provided to Syrian refugees.

We also had an opportunity to discuss other regional issues, for example, our continued efforts to facilitate negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians and arrive at a peace deal in that part of the world. We appreciated the Amir's wisdom in engaging with the Government of Iraq and helping to improve and create peaceful relations between Kuwait and Iraq.

And we also discussed ways that we can improve the economic prospects for people in the region in countries like Yemen, for example, that are experiencing great challenges.

So we appreciate the strength and leadership of Kuwait and its friendship. And we are looking forward to extensive cooperation in the future.

Amir Sabah. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to President Obama for the warm welcome and hospitality. I am happy to refer to the productive and constructive talk between myself and President Obama, which included topics related to our bilateral relations where we renewed the determination to achieve what is the best for the mutual interests of our both countries.

We also discussed the continued detention of the two Kuwaiti detainees in Guantanamo, and asked President Obama to speed up the process of releasing them in line with the President's commitment of closing down Guantanamo and also in line with the assurances given by the Kuwaiti authorities.

We also expressed our satisfaction with the positive developments related to the Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations. We also discussed the subject of the security of the Gulf region and our

combined efforts to achieve security, stability, and development in this important, active region, especially taking into consideration the current development in the region.

Additionally, we also discussed the harsh humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people and the continuation of the ongoing humanitarian deterioration in Syria and suffering of the refugees and the importance of interlacing all efforts in a speedy manner to reach a peaceful solution and keep the region free from the danger of war.

We also discussed the importance of achieving security and stability in the Arab Republic of Egypt and support all the constructive efforts in this roadmap. We also discussed the peace process in the Middle East and the importance of focusing all international efforts to advance the planned negotiations to create positive elements in this regard and the continued efforts of the United States of America in the peace process. Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

Note: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey V. Lavrov of Russia. Amir Sabah referred to Faez al-Kandari and Fawzi al-Odah, Kuwaiti nationals in U.S. custody at the Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, detention facility. Amir Sabah spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

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