

Statement on the 2015 National Security Strategy
February 6, 2015

Today, the United States is stronger and better positioned to seize the opportunities of a still new century and safeguard our interests against the risks of an insecure world.

America's growing economic strength is the foundation of our national security and a critical source of our influence abroad. Since the Great Recession, we have created nearly 11 million new jobs during the longest private sector job growth in our history. Unemployment has fallen to its lowest level in 6 years. We are now the world leader in oil and gas production. We continue to set the pace for science, technology, and innovation in the global economy.

We also benefit from a young and growing workforce, and a resilient and diversified economy. The entrepreneurial spirit of our workers and businesses undergirds our economic edge. Our higher education system is the finest in the world, drawing more of the best students globally every year. We continue to attract immigrants from every corner of the world who renew our country with their energy and entrepreneurial talents.

Globally, we have moved beyond the large ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that defined so much of American foreign policy over the past decade. Compared to the nearly 180,000 troops we had in Iraq and Afghanistan when I took office, we now have fewer than 15,000 deployed in those countries. We possess a military whose might, technology, and geostrategic reach is unrivaled in human history. We have renewed our alliances from Europe to Asia.

Now, at this pivotal moment, we continue to face serious challenges to our national security, even as we are working to shape the opportunities of tomorrow. Violent extremism and an evolving terrorist threat raise a persistent risk of attacks on America and our allies. Escalating challenges to cybersecurity, aggression by Russia, the accelerating impacts of climate change, and the outbreak of infectious diseases all give rise to anxieties about global security. We must be clear-eyed about these and other challenges and recognize the United States has a unique capability to mobilize and lead the international community to meet them.

Any successful strategy to ensure the safety of the American people and advance our national security interests must begin with an undeniable truth—America must lead. Strong and sustained American leadership is essential to a rules-based international order that promotes global security and prosperity as well as the dignity and human rights of all peoples. The question is never whether America should lead, but how we lead.

Abroad, we are demonstrating that while we will act unilaterally against threats to our core interests, we are stronger when we mobilize collective action. That is why we are leading international coalitions to confront the acute challenges posed by aggression, terrorism, and disease. We are leading over 60 partners in a global campaign to degrade and ultimately defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria, including by working to disrupt the flow of foreign fighters to those countries, while keeping pressure on al-Qa'ida. We are leading a global effort to stop the deadly spread of the Ebola virus at its source. In lockstep with our European allies, we are enforcing tough sanctions on Russia to impose costs and deter future aggression.

Even as we meet these pressing challenges, we are pursuing historic opportunities. Our rebalance to Asia and the Pacific is yielding deeper ties with a more diverse set of allies and partners. When complete, the Trans-Pacific Partnership will generate trade and investment opportunities—and create high-quality jobs at home—across a region that represents more than 40 percent of global trade. We are primed to unlock the potential of our relationship with India. The scope of our cooperation with China is unprecedented, even as we remain alert to China's military modernization and reject any role for intimidation in resolving territorial disputes. We are deepening our investment in Africa, accelerating access to energy, health, and food security in a rapidly rising region. Our opening to Cuba will enhance our engagement in our own hemisphere, where there are enormous opportunities to consolidate gains in pursuit of peace, prosperity, democracy, and energy security.

Globally, we are committed to advancing the Prague Agenda, including by stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and securing nuclear materials. We are currently testing whether it is possible to achieve a comprehensive resolution to assure the international community that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful, while the Joint Plan of Action has halted the progress of Iran's program. We are building on our own energy security—and the ground-breaking commitment we made with China to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—to cement an international consensus on arresting climate change. We are shaping global standards for cybersecurity and building international capacity to disrupt and investigate cyber threats. We are playing a leading role in defining the international community's post-2015 agenda for eliminating extreme poverty and promoting sustainable development while prioritizing women and youth.

Underpinning it all, we are upholding our enduring commitment to the advancement of democracy and human rights and building new coalitions to combat corruption and to support open governments and open societies. In doing so, we are working to support democratic transitions, while also reaching out to the drivers of change in this century: young people and entrepreneurs.

Finally, I believe that America leads best when we draw upon our hopes rather than our fears. To succeed, we must draw upon the power of our example—that means viewing our commitment to our values and the rule of law as a strength, and not an inconvenience. That is why I have worked to ensure that America has the capabilities we need to respond to threats abroad, while acting in line with our values—prohibiting the use of torture; embracing constraints on our use of new technologies like drones; and upholding our commitment to privacy and civil liberties. These actions are a part of our resilience at home and a source of our influence abroad.

On all these fronts, America leads from a position of strength. But, this does not mean we can or should attempt to dictate the trajectory of all unfolding events around the world. As powerful as we are and will remain, our resources and influence are not infinite. And in a complex world, many of the security problems we face do not lend themselves to quick and easy fixes. The United States will always defend our interests and uphold our commitments to allies and partners. But, we have to make hard choices among many competing priorities, and we must always resist the over-reach that comes when we make decisions based upon fear. Moreover, we must recognize that a smart national security strategy does not rely solely on military power. Indeed, in the long-term, our efforts to work with other countries to counter the ideology and root causes of violent extremism will be more important than our capacity to remove terrorists from the battlefield.

The challenges we face require strategic patience and persistence. They require us to take our responsibilities seriously and make the smart investments in the foundations of our national power. Therefore, I will continue to pursue a comprehensive agenda that draws on all elements of our national strength, that is attuned to the strategic risks and opportunities we face, and that is guided by the principles and priorities set out in this strategy. Moreover, I will continue to insist on budgets that safeguard our strength and work with the Congress to end sequestration, which undercuts our national security.

This is an ambitious agenda, and not everything will be completed during my Presidency. But I believe this is an achievable agenda, especially if we proceed with confidence and if we restore the bipartisan center that has been a pillar of strength for American foreign policy in decades past. As Americans, we will always have our differences, but what unites us is the national consensus that American global leadership remains indispensable. We embrace our exceptional role and responsibilities at a time when our unique contributions and capabilities are needed most, and when the choices we make today can mean greater security and prosperity for our Nation for decades to come.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: The statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as part of the 2015 National Security Strategy.

Categories: Statements by the President : U.S. National Security Strategy .

Subjects: Africa : U.S. assistance; Africa : West Africa, Ebola epidemic, response and containment efforts; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Deployment; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Nonproliferation efforts; Asia : Relations with U.S.; Budget, Federal : Government programs, spending reductions; China : Carbon emissions, reduction efforts; China : Relations with U.S.; Congress : Bipartisanship; Cuba : Relations with U.S.; Defense and national security : Cybersecurity :: Cyber attacks; Defense and national security : Cybersecurity :: Strengthening efforts; Defense and national security : National Security Strategy, U.S.; Developing countries : Poverty; Diseases : Infectious disease outbreaks, prevention efforts; Economy, national : Improvement; Environment : Climate change; Foreign policy, U.S. : Civil and human rights, promotion efforts; Foreign policy, U.S. : Democratization; India : Relations with U.S.; Iran : Nuclear weapons development; Iraq : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Russia : International and U.S. sanctions; Russia : Relations with Ukraine; Syria : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist organization; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Global threat; Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP); Ukraine : Russia, role.

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