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Remarks Following a Meeting With Members of the National Security Team on the Shootings in San Bernardino, California

December 3, 2015

Yesterday a tragedy occurred in San Bernardino, and as I said in the immediate aftermath, our first order of business is to send our thoughts and prayers to the families of those who have been killed and to pray for a speedy recovery for those who were injured during this terrible attack.

I had a chance to speak with Mayor Davis of San Bernardino, and I thanked law enforcement in that city for their timely and professional response. I indicated to Mayor Davis that the entire country is thinking about that community and thanked him and his office for the way that they've been able to manage an extraordinarily difficult situation with calm and clarity and very much appreciated the coordination that's been taking place between local law enforcement and the FBI investigators.

At this stage, we do not yet know why this terrible event occurred. We do know that the two individuals who were killed were equipped with weapons and appeared to have access to additional weaponry at their homes. But we don't know why they did it. We don't know at this point the extent of their plans. We do not know their motivations.

And I just received a briefing from FBI Director Comey, as well as Attorney General Lynch, indicating the course of their investigation. At this point, this is now a FBI investigation. That's been done in cooperation and consultation with local law enforcement. It is possible that this was terrorist related, but we don't know. It's also possible that this was workplace related. And until the FBI has been able to conduct what are going to be a large number of interviews, until we understand the nature of the workplace relationship between the individual and his superiors—because he worked with the organization where this terrible shooting took place—until all the social media and electronic information has been exploited, we're just not going to be able to answer those questions.

But what I can assure the American people is, we're going to get to the bottom of this and that we are going to be vigilant, as we always are, in getting the facts before we issue any decisive judgments in terms of how this occurred.

More broadly, as I said yesterday, we see the prevalence of these kinds of mass shootings in this country, and I think so many Americans sometimes feel as if there's nothing we can do about it. We are fortunate to have an extraordinary combination of law enforcement and intelligence and military that work every single day to keep us safe. But we can't just leave it to our professionals to deal with the problem of these kinds of horrible killings. We all have a part to play.

And I do think that, as the investigation moves forward, it's going to be important for all of us—including our legislatures—to see what we can do to make sure that when individuals decide that they want to do somebody harm, we're making it a little harder for them to do it. Because right now it's just too easy. And we're going to have to, I think, search ourselves as a society to make sure that we can take basic steps that would make it harder—not impossible, but harder—for individuals to get access to weapons.

So there will be, I think, a press conference later today led by the Attorney General. Director Comey will continue to brief not only the press, but also Members of Congress about the course of the investigation. Our expectation is, is that this may take some time before we're able to sort it all through. There may be mixed motives involved in this, which makes the investigation more complicated. But rest assured that we will get to the bottom of this.

And in the meantime, once again, I want to offer our deepest condolences to those who've been affected by this terrible tragedy. And for those who've been injured, we hope that they get well quickly and that they're able to be back together with their families.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tashfeen Malik and Syed Rizwan Farook, suspected perpetrators of the shootings and attempted bombing at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, CA, on December 2. Participating in the meeting were Vice President Joe Biden; Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch; Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James B. Comey, Jr.; Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper, Jr.; National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice; Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco; Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas; Deputy Director of the National Counterterrorism Center John J. Mulligan; and Deputy National Security Adviser Avril D. Haines.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : San Bernardino, CA, shootings, meeting with national security team.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Comey, James B., Jr.; Davis, Carey R.; Farook, Syed Rizwan; Lynch, Loretta E.; Malik, Tashfeen.

Subjects: California : Terrorist attack in San Bernardino; Justice, Department of : Attorney General; Justice, Department of : Bureau of Investigation, Federal; Law enforcement and crime : Gun control; Law enforcement and crime : Gun violence, prevention efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Law enforcement officers, service and dedication.

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