

**Remarks at a Briefing on Implementation of the Recommendations of the President's Task Force on 21st-Century Policing**

*July 22, 2016*

Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Have a seat. Well, I just wanted to come by to say thank you for being here and the extraordinary work that you do each and every day. I was a little bit delayed. Some of you are aware, there were shootings in Germany. And we don't yet know exactly what's happening there, but obviously, our hearts go out to those who may have been injured. It's still an active situation. And Germany is one of our closest allies, so we are going to pledge all the support that they may need in dealing with these circumstances.

It's a good reminder of something that I've said over the last couple of weeks, which is our way of life, our freedoms, our ability to go about our business every day, raising our kids and seeing them grow up and graduate from high school and now about to leave their dad—*[laughter]*—I'm sorry, I'm getting a little too personal, getting a little too personal there *[laughter]*—that depends on law enforcement. It depends on the men and women in uniform every single day who are under some of the most adverse circumstances imaginable at times, making sure to keep us safe.

And obviously, we have gone through a really tough time these last couple of weeks on a whole bunch of fronts. And most recently, I had the tough job of talking to the widows of those police officers who had been killed in Baton Rouge. And I know that for men and women in uniform, each loss like that is like a loss in your own family.

But I wanted to come by to make sure that all of you knew how grateful the American people are for your service, how appreciative we are of your sacrifice. As a general proposition, you guys are not looking for the spotlight; you just want to do your jobs and keep your community safe. And you also want to come home to your own families at the end of a tough day. And for you to put yourself out there like that is one of the greatest gifts that you could give your fellow citizens.

So our job is to support you in every way that we can. It is my view—and let's be honest, sometimes, this is a controversial view—that one of the best ways to provide support to our police officers is to make sure that we are addressing potential underlying tensions between officers and the communities where they're serving, that pretending sometimes that those tensions aren't there is not going to make things better. But when we're able to bring people together and strengthen those bonds, then that's going to make the lives of police officers on a day-to-day basis just a little bit easier, and it's going to make our streets safer, and it's going to create the kind of atmosphere whereby we continue to bring crime rates down to near-historic levels.

And I made this point at a press conference yesterday—because we're in political season and there's a lot of discussion—the fact of the matter is, is that as disturbing as some of the upticks in crime that we've seen in some of our cities around the country, including my hometown of Chicago, violent crime is substantially lower today than it was 10 years ago, 20 years ago, or 30 years ago.

Over the last 4 or 5 years, we've seen violent crime rates that we haven't seen since the 1960s. And that's not an accident. That's in part because police departments around the

country have gotten really smart about preventing crime and are working with communities in all kinds of smart ways. And we can build on that progress, but it's going to require us to do exactly what you are doing today, and that is trying to figure out how we can work together to ensure that our police departments and our communities are aligned in what we all want, which is families that are safe, people abiding by the law, making sure that our kids are growing up in an environment where they can go to school and get an education and get a job and raise families of their own without fearing that somehow they're going to be struck down by a bullet or harassed and peddled drugs to by somebody who is intent on breaking the law.

So this is the fourth in a series of gatherings with law enforcement that we've organized just since June. It builds on the work that we did in our Task Force for 21st-Century Policing. My hope is that it's been useful in giving you some tools and best practices to give you a sense of how departments on the cutting edge are using data to train officers and engage with the community.

We also are, hopefully, hearing from you about what you've learned in your experience works and doesn't work and where the Federal Government can partner with your departments and State and local law enforcement officers across the country to do even better.

Because the fact is, there's exceptional policing being done every single day. We've seen departments organize community forums and panels and cookouts to bring officers together with civil rights leaders and activists and young people. Many of you, I'm sure, saw the viral videos of police playing pickup basketball with kids or dancing the Nae Nae, which wasn't, you know—[laughter]—that was a brave officer who did that. [Laughter] There are a lot more examples, though, that don't find their way onto Twitter feeds.

So I want not only to encourage all of you to implement the Task Force recommendations in ways that are tailored to your community and your needs, but I also want you to share with us things that you think work that can make a difference because our job really is as a convener. The Federal Government is not responsible for day-to-day policing of our communities, but we do have the ability to project best practices and let people share what they've seen that works.

And we do have some pretty good ideas about how to facilitate more discussions in your own communities. We are working closely with a lot of departments about how to collect data and do that better and what we've learned with respect to training that can make police work safer and more effective.

And part of the reason I wanted to stop by here is invariably what happens is, the media's attention shifts. There's a tragedy and a spate of police officers down or a shooting involving police, and it captures the media's attention. And then suddenly 2 months from now, there's a different story, except in one of your departments, somebody is still getting shot; it just doesn't warrant attention anymore, apparently, because it's not part of the narrative.

And what I promised both those who were angry about Minnesota and Baton Rouge, but I also promised the widows and families and children of folks in Dallas and Baton Rouge was that this is something we need to care about all the time. This is something we are going to sustain. This is not a one-off. We're going to just keep on at this. And progress is not always going to be as quick as we'd like. And there are going to be misunderstandings sometimes, and there are going to be temptations for politics to fan the flames of division instead of trying to bring people together.

But look, I'm only going to be President for 6 more months, but I'm a citizen who's going to depend on law enforcement for the rest of my life. And I've got two daughters, and

hopefully, way in the future, some grandchildren who are going to depend on law enforcement. [Laughter] And I—and so I've got a big stake in this. And I'm going to make sure that I can do everything I can to move this in a positive direction so that, out of some heartbreak and tragedy, we can look back 5 years from now, 10 years from now, 15 years from now, and say, you know what, we keep—we kept getting better, and police officers are honored, their communities are supporting them, they are safer, and those communities truly recognize that they are being served and protected by the men and women in blue.

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:51 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Tonja Garafola, wife of Baton Rouge, LA, East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Deputy Brad Garafola, who was killed in the shootings in Baton Rouge, LA, on July 17; and Dechia Gerald and Trenisha Jackson, respective wives of Baton Rouge Police Department officers Matthew Gerald and Montrell Jackson, who were also killed in the July 17 shootings.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : 21st-Century Policing, President's Task Force on, implementation of recommendations, briefing

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Garafola, Brad; Garafola, Tonja; Gerald, Dechia; Gerald, Matthew; Jackson, Montrell; Jackson, Trenisha; Obama, Malia; Obama, Natasha "Sasha".

*Subjects:* Civil rights : Minorities :: Relations with police; Germany : Shootings in Munich; Law enforcement and crime : 2016 crime rate, decline; Law enforcement and crime : 21st-Century Policing, President's Task Force on; Law enforcement and crime : Community-oriented policing, strengthening efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Law enforcement officers, service and dedication; Law enforcement and crime : State and community law enforcement agencies, Federal support; Louisiana : Baton Rouge :: Death of Alton Sterling; Louisiana : Baton Rouge :: Shootings of law enforcement officers; Minnesota : Death of Philando Castile in Falcon Heights.

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