

President Obama. Germany has been a stalwart NATO ally from the start of this conflict and has contributed troops, has contributed resources, and will continue to contribute troops and resources. You just heard Chancellor Merkel emphasize that at its core, what has made NATO so effective is the Article 5 principle that if one ally is attacked, then all allies come together to deal with the problem. That's been the unchanging element of NATO and, by the way, an element that I don't envision changing as a consequence of the strategic review that may take place. That's the essence of a successful alliance.

And so what I've said to Chancellor Merkel is the same thing I said to President Sarkozy and the same thing I'll say to all the NATO heads of state this evening, and that is that we have lost our focus in Afghanistan; now we have refocused. We have a strategy that, I think there's a broad consensus, brings all elements of our power to bear, and will allow us to succeed.

We will now all have to make additional efforts and sustained efforts in order to succeed, with the understanding that our ultimate goal is not to occupy Afghanistan and not to run Afghanistan, but rather to provide the Afghan Government the capacity to provide for its own security and ensure that it is not once again a safe haven for terrorists.

It will not be an easy task. And one of the changes in our approach is that we are going to insist on a consistent review of the progress that we're making. And if we discover that the approach we're taking is not effective and is not working, then we will change it.

And the one thing that I would say to the German people is the same thing that I would—I've said to the American people, which is, I understand that after a long campaign in Afghanistan, people can feel weary of

war, even a war that is just. Nothing is harder than sending young men and women into harm's way. And nothing is more sobering as a leader than signing a letter of condolence to a family of somebody who has died in war. And so I understand why both Americans and Germans would be feeling a sense, particularly in the midst of economic crisis, of why are we still there. But I believe strongly, and I think that our NATO allies believe strongly, that we cannot allow a territory in which people who would kill our citizens with impunity can allow—can be permitted to operate.

So we've got a difficult job to do, but I am absolutely convinced that we can carry it out. And Germany is going to be a strong partner with the United States and other NATO allies in getting the job done.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

Chancellor Merkel. Dankeschon. Wir sehen uns wieder.

Interpreter. Thank you and see you later.

President Obama. Dankeschon. My German is not as good as Chancellor Merkel's. [Laughter]

Chancellor Merkel. What a surprise, Mr. President. My English also not—

President Obama. No, your English is great.

Chancellor Merkel. —as yours. [Laughter]

President Obama. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:30 p.m. at the Rathaus. In his remarks, the President referred to President Nicolas Sarkozy of France. Chancellor Merkel referred to Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen of Denmark, Secretary General-designate of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Chancellor Merkel and some reporters spoke in German, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on Senate Passage of the Fiscal Year 2010 Budget April 3, 2009

Tonight the Senate has joined the House of Representatives in taking an important step toward rebuilding our struggling economy. This budget resolution embraces our most fundamental priorities: an energy plan that will end

our dependence on foreign oil and spur a new clean energy economy, an education system that will ensure our children will be able to compete in the economy of the 21st century, and health care reform that finally confronts the

back-breaking costs plaguing families, businesses, and government alike. And by making hard choices and challenging the old ways of doing business, we will cut in half the budget deficit we inherited within 4 years. With this

vote comes an obligation to pursue our efforts to go through the budget line by line, searching for additional savings. Like the families we serve, we must cut the things we don't need to invest in those we do.

Statement on the Shooting in Binghamton, New York

April 3, 2009

Michelle and I were shocked and deeply saddened to learn about the act of senseless violence in Binghamton, NY, today. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims, their families, and the people of Binghamton. We don't

yet know all the facts, but my administration is actively monitoring the situation, and the Vice President is in touch with Governor Paterson and local officials to track developments.

Remarks to the North Atlantic Council in Strasbourg, France

April 4, 2009

Thank you so much. I want to address my remarks directly to the delegation from Albania and Croatia and their leadership: Welcome to NATO. We are very excited about your participation. The Atlantic alliance is 60 years old, and it's a measure of our vitality that we are still welcoming new members.

I think it's important to point out that both Croatia and Albania have already done many significant things on behalf of the alliance, including the 140 Albanians and

Croatian troops who have served in Afghanistan. And I think that indicates the degree to which they will be strong contributors to the alliance.

To both countries, your large contributions—your proportionally large contributions to NATO's joint efforts show what a priority you've made this, and we are grateful for it. And we are proud to have you as allies.

Congratulations, as well, on the progress that you've made in difficult reforms that have brought you to this point. Both countries have achieved an extraordinary amount, and continuing along this path will help you

bring—will help you become even closer to Euro-Atlantic integration.

I'd also like to note that as we welcome Albania and Croatia to NATO, this will not be the last time that we have such a celebration, and I look forward to the day when we can welcome Macedonia to the alliance. The door to membership will remain open for other countries that meet NATO's standards and can make a meaningful contribution to allied security.

Now, I would like to invite the Secretary General as well as the Presidents of Albania and Croatia to join me. We have the original treaty that has been archived in the United States, but we also have two duplicates that we would like to present to the Presidents of each country, so if you could join me at this table.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:49 a.m. at the Palais de la Musique et des Congres. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary General Jaakob Gijsbert "Jaap" de Hoop Scheffer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; President Bamir Topi of Albania; and President Stjepan Mesic of Croatia.