

example. We promote our values by living our values at home.

This forum also challenges us to act collectively, as a community of democratic nations, to support countries undergoing democratic transitions and to push back against threats to democratic progress. For instance, the United States is particularly concerned about the spread of restrictions on civil society, the growing use of law to curb rather than enhance freedom, and widespread corruption that is undermining the faith of citizens in their governments. As people around the world confront these challenges, they have tools that could not have been imagined 10 years ago, including new technologies that provide unique and powerful

opportunities for advancing human rights and democracy.

I commend Lithuania for its leadership of the Community and its efforts to focus the group's work on today's pressing challenges including growing threats to civil society, the empowerment of women, and the linkages between poverty, democracy, and development.

I welcome this celebration of the Community's first 10 years and believe that its role in fostering strong and effective cooperation among the world's democracies is essential for confronting the challenges ahead. Working together in partnership, we can advance the dignity of all human beings and the rights that are universal.

## Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration

July 4, 2010

*The President.* Good evening, everybody. On behalf of Michelle and myself and the girls and Bo—[laughter]—welcome to the White House, and happy Fourth of July.

All across our great country today, folks are coming together, decked out in their red and white and blue, firing up the grill, having a good time with family, just like here today. Now, of course, I'll admit that the backyard is a little bigger here. [Laughter] But it's the same spirit. And Michelle and I couldn't imagine a better way to celebrate America's birthday than with America's extraordinary men and women in uniform and your families.

Now, we decided to let you leave your uniforms at home for today. Although, I have to say, I met a young corporal here who was wearing a black suit. And I said, "Man, it's hot here." He said, "I'm sorry, sir. I know you're my Commander in Chief, but my grandma told me I had to wear a suit." [Laughter] I can't—you can't argue with grandma. [Laughter]

But we do want all of you to relax and have some fun today. And that also goes for the leaders who are joining us here today, including Deputy Secretary of Defense Bill Lynn, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jim "Hoss" Cartwright, Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, Air Force Secretary Mike Donley,

Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Robert Papp, and the many outstanding senior enlisted officers who are here today.

I want to acknowledge that my Vice President, Joe Biden, and his wonderful wife Dr. Jill Biden aren't with us because they're spending the Fourth of July with our troops in Iraq. And I would add that because of the honor and heroism of our troops, we are poised to end our combat mission in Iraq this summer, on schedule. That's thanks to so many of you.

Now, this is the day when we celebrate the very essence of America and the spirit—

*Audience member.* [Inaudible]—bring the boys home!

*The President.* They're coming. [Laughter] This is the day when we celebrate the very essence of America and the spirit that has defined us as a people and as a nation for more than two centuries. Even now, all these years later, we still look in awe at the small band of patriots who stood up and risked everything and defied an empire to declare "that these united Colonies are, and of right ought to be free and independent States."

We're amazed at the debt to a founding generation that gave their blood to give meaning to those words, pledging to each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. And we

celebrate the principles that are timeless, tenets first declared by men of property and wealth, but which gave rise to what Lincoln called a “new birth of freedom” in America: civil rights and voting rights, workers’ rights and women’s rights, and the rights of every American.

And on this day that is uniquely American, we’re reminded that our Declaration, our example, made us a beacon to the world, not only inspiring people to demand their own freedom, from Latin American to Africa, from Europe to Asia, but even now, in this time, these ideals still light the world.

Two hundred and thirty-four years later, the words are just as bold, just as revolutionary, as they were when they were first pronounced: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

These are not simply words on aging parchment. They are the principles that define us as a nation, the values we cherish as a people, and the ideals we strive for as a society, even as we know that we constantly have to work in order to perfect our Union, and that work is never truly done.

The Founders understood this. There in that hall in Philadelphia, as they debated the Declaration, John Adams wrote to his beloved Abigail. He predicted that independence would be celebrated “from one end of the continent to the other, from this time forward forever.” But he added, “I am well aware of the toil and blood and treasure that it will cost us to maintain this declaration and support and defend these states.”

So today we also celebrate all of you, the men and women of our Armed Forces who defend this country we love.

We salute the United States Army, including a soldier who served on more than 150 combat missions in Afghanistan, and after losing most of his arm in an IED attack, recently completed a grueling 26-mile run, inspiring all who know him and all of us; that’s Staff Sergeant Gabriel Garcia. Gabriel.

We salute the United States Navy, and a sailor who excels in a job few can imagine but for which all are grateful, a commander of an explosive ordnance disposal team in Iraq, his nerve and steady hand has diffused countless bombs and saved countless lives; that’s Lieutenant Erich Frandrup. Where’s Erich?

We salute the United States Air Force, and an airman who during an attack on her vehicle in Iraq that left her seriously wounded, directed medics to help another wounded American first and offered her own bandages to help save his life; that’s Captain Wendy Kosek.

We salute the United States Marine Corps, and a marine who for his heroic actions in Afghanistan, exposing himself to enemy machine gunfire to help rescue his fellow marines, was recognized with the Bronze Star for valor, Staff Sergeant Jonathan Piel.

And we salute the United States Coast Guard, including a coastguardsman who commanded the first U.S. vessel to arrive in Haiti after the earthquake, helping to pave the way for the one of the most complex humanitarian efforts ever attempted, Commander Diane Durham.

This is the spirit of which Adams spoke so long ago. You are the men and women who toil to defend these States. You are patriots, and you have earned your place among the greatest of generations.

Yet on this day, we know that America’s journey is not sustained by those in uniform alone. It must be the calling and cause of every American. So let us ensure that our troops always have the support that they need to succeed in the missions we ask of them, and that includes public support here at home.

Let us forge a national commitment to support our extraordinary military families, not just now, during war, but at every stage of your lives. And thanks to Michelle and Jill Biden for challenging us to do that.

Let us resolve, as citizens, to carry on the improbable experiment that began more than 200 years ago; not simply declaring our principles, but living them here at home; not simply celebrating our Union, but always working to perfect it.

*July 6 / Administration of Barack Obama, 2010*

And here in a still young century, let us renew our commitment to stand with those around the world who, like us, still believe in that simple yet revolutionary notion that we are all endowed by our Creator “with certain inalienable rights.”

So happy Fourth of July, everybody. God bless all of you and all our men and women in

uniform and your families, and God bless the United States of America.

And with that, let me turn it over to our outstanding United States Marine Band.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7 p.m. from the Blue Room Balcony at the White House. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 6.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and an Exchange With Reporters *July 6, 2010*

*President Obama.* Well, I just completed an excellent one-on-one discussion with Prime Minister Netanyahu, and I want to welcome him back to the White House.

I want to, first of all, thank him for the wonderful statement that he made in honor of the Fourth of July, our Independence Day, when he was still in Israel. And it marked just one more chapter in the extraordinary friendship between our two countries.

As Prime Minister Netanyahu indicated in his speech, the bond between the United States and Israel is unbreakable. It encompasses our national security interests, our strategic interests, but most importantly, the bond of two democracies who share a common set of values and whose people have grown closer and closer as time goes on.

During our discussions in our private meeting, we covered a wide range of issues. We discussed the issue of Gaza, and I commended Prime Minister Netanyahu on the progress that's been made in allowing more goods into Gaza. We've seen real progress on the ground. I think it's been acknowledged that it has moved more quickly and more effectively than many people anticipated.

Obviously, there's still tensions and issues there that have to be resolved, but our two countries are working cooperatively together to deal with these issues. The Quartet has been, I think, very helpful as well. And we believe that there is a way to make sure that the people of Gaza are able to prosper economically, while Israel is able to maintain its legitimate security

needs in not allowing missiles and weapons to get to Hamas.

We discussed the issue of Iran, and we pointed out that as a consequence of some hard work internationally, we have instituted through the U.N. Security Council the toughest sanctions ever directed at an Iranian Government. In addition, last week, I signed our own set of sanctions, coming out of the United States Congress, as robust as any that we've ever seen. Other countries are following suit. And so we intend to continue to put pressure on Iran to meet its international obligations and to cease the kinds of provocative behavior that has made it a threat to its neighbors and the international community.

We had an extensive discussion about the prospects for Middle East peace. I believe that Prime Minister Netanyahu wants peace. I think he's willing to take risks for peace. And during our conversation, he once again reaffirmed his willingness to engage in serious negotiations with the Palestinians around what I think should be the goal not just of the two principals involved, but the entire world, and that is two states living side by side in peace and security.

Israel's security needs met, the Palestinians having a sovereign state that they call their own, those are goals that have obviously escaped our grasp for decades now. But now more than ever, I think, is the time for us to seize on that vision. And I think that Prime Minister Netanyahu is prepared to do so. It's going to be difficult; it's going to be hard work. But we've seen already proximity talks taking place. My envoy,