

## Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation Repealing the United States Military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Policy *December 18, 2010*

Today the Senate has taken an historic step toward ending a policy that undermines our national security while violating the very ideals that our brave men and women in uniform risk their lives to defend. By ending "don't ask, don't tell," no longer will our Nation be denied the service of thousands of patriotic Americans forced to leave the military, despite years of exemplary performance, because they happen to be gay. And no longer will many thousands more be asked to live a lie in order to serve the country they love.

As Commander in Chief, I am also absolutely convinced that making this change will only underscore the professionalism of our troops as the best led and best trained fighting force the world has ever known. And I join the Secretary of Defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,

as well as the overwhelming majority of service-members asked by the Pentagon, in knowing that we can responsibly transition to a new policy, while ensuring our military strength and readiness.

I want to thank Majority Leader Reid, Senators Lieberman and Collins, and the countless others who have worked so hard to get this done. It is time to close this chapter in our history. It is time to recognize that sacrifice, valor, and integrity are no more defined by sexual orientation than they are by race or gender, religion or creed. It is time to allow gay and lesbian Americans to serve their country openly. I urge the Senate to send this bill to my desk so that I can sign it into law.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 2965.

## Letter to Senate Leadership on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and Missile Defense *December 18, 2010*

*Dear Senator:*

As the Senate considers the New START Treaty, I want to share with you my views on the issue of missile defense, which has been the subject of much debate in the Senate's review of the treaty.

Pursuant to the National Missile Defense Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-38), it has long been the policy of the United States to deploy as soon as is technologically possible an effective National Missile Defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States against limited ballistic missile attack, whether accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate. Thirty ground-based interceptors based at Fort Greeley, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, are now defending the nation. All United States missile defense programs—including all phases of the European Phased Adaptive Approach to missile defense (EPAA) and programs

to defend United States deployed forces, allies, and partners against regional threats—are consistent with this policy.

The New START Treaty places no limitations on the development or deployment of our missile defense programs. As the NATO Summit meeting in Lisbon last month underscored, we are proceeding apace with a missile defense system in Europe designed to provide full coverage for NATO members on the continent, as well as deployed U.S. forces, against the growing threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles. The final phase of the system will also augment our current defenses against intercontinental ballistic missiles from Iran targeted against the United States.

All NATO allies agreed in Lisbon that the growing threat of missile proliferation, and our Article 5 commitment of collective defense, requires that the Alliance develop a territorial missile defense capability. The Alliance further

agreed that the EPAA, which I announced in September 2009, will be a crucial contribution to this capability. Starting in 2011, we will begin deploying the first phase of the EPAA, to protect large parts of southern Europe from short- and medium-range ballistic missile threats. In subsequent phases, we will deploy longer-range and more effective land-based Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) interceptors in Romania and Poland to protect Europe against medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles. In the final phase, planned for the end of the decade, further upgrades of the SM-3 interceptor will provide an ascent-phase intercept capability to augment our defense of NATO European territory, as well as that of the United States, against future threats of ICBMs launched from Iran.

The Lisbon decisions represent an historic achievement, making clear that all NATO allies believe we need an effective territorial missile defense to defend against the threats we face now and in the future. The EPAA represents the right response. At Lisbon, the Alliance also invited the Russian Federation to cooperate on missile defense, which could lead to adding Russian capabilities to those deployed by NATO to enhance our common security against common threats. The Lisbon Summit thus demonstrated that the Alliance's missile defenses can be strengthened by improving NATO-Russian relations.

This comes even as we have made clear that the system we intend to pursue with Russia will not be a joint system, and it will not in any way limit United States' or NATO's missile defense capabilities. Effective cooperation with Russia could enhance the overall effectiveness and efficiency of our combined territorial missile defenses, and at the same time provide Russia with greater security. Irrespective of how cooperation with Russia develops, the Alliance alone bears responsibility for defending NATO's members, consistent with our Treaty obligations for collective defense. The EPAA and NATO's territorial missile defense capability will allow us to do that.

In signing the New START Treaty, the Russian Federation issued a statement that ex-

pressed its view that the extraordinary events referred to in Article XIV of the Treaty include a "build-up in the missile defense capabilities of the United States of America such that it would give rise to a threat to the strategic nuclear potential of the Russian Federation." Article XIV(3), as you know, gives each Party the right to withdraw from the Treaty if it believes its supreme interests are jeopardized.

The United States did not and does not agree with the Russian statement. We believe that the continued development and deployment of U.S. missile defense systems, including qualitative and quantitative improvements to such systems, do not and will not threaten the strategic balance with the Russian Federation, and have provided policy and technical explanations to Russia on why we believe that to be the case. Although the United States cannot circumscribe Russia's sovereign rights under Article XIV(3), we believe that the continued improvement and deployment of U.S. missile defense systems do not constitute a basis for questioning the effectiveness and viability of the New START Treaty, and therefore would not give rise to circumstances justifying Russia's withdrawal from the Treaty.

Regardless of Russia's actions in this regard, as long as I am President, and as long as the Congress provides the necessary funding, the United States will continue to develop and deploy effective missile defenses to protect the United States, our deployed forces, and our allies and partners. My Administration plans to deploy all four phases of the EPAA. While advances of technology or future changes in the threat could modify the details or timing of the later phases of the EPAA—one reason this approach is called "adaptive"—I will take every action available to me to support the deployment of all four phases.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Sens. Harry M. Reid and A. Mitchell McConnell.

## Statement on the Formation of Iraq's Government

December 21, 2010

Today's vote in the Council of Representatives is a significant moment in Iraq's history and a major step forward in advancing national unity. I congratulate Iraq's political leaders, the Members of the Council of Representatives, and the Iraqi people on the formation of a new Government of national partnership.

Yet again, the Iraqi people and their elected representatives have demonstrated their commitment to working through a democratic process to resolve their differences and shape

Iraq's future. Their decision to form an inclusive partnership Government is a clear rejection of the efforts by extremists to spur sectarian division.

Iraq faces important challenges, but the Iraqi people can also seize a future of opportunity. The United States will continue to strengthen our long-term partnership with Iraq's people and leaders as they build a prosperous and peaceful nation that is fully integrated into the region and international community.

## Statement on the Federal Communications Commission's Vote on Internet Neutrality

December 21, 2010

Today's decision will help preserve the free and open nature of the Internet while encouraging innovation, protecting consumer choice, and defending free speech. Throughout this process, parties on all sides of this issue—from consumer groups to technology companies to broadband providers—came together to make their voices heard. This decision is an important component of our overall strategy to advance American innovation, economic growth, and job creation.

As a candidate for President, I pledged to preserve the freedom and openness that have

allowed the Internet to become a transformative and powerful platform for speech and expression. That's a pledge I'll continue to keep as President. As technology and the market continue to evolve at a rapid pace, my administration will remain vigilant and see to it that innovation is allowed to flourish, that consumers are protected from abuse, and that the democratic spirit of the Internet remains intact.

I congratulate the FCC, its chairman, Julius Genachowski, and Congressman Henry Waxman for their work achieving this important goal today.

## Remarks on Signing the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010

December 22, 2010

*The President.* Thank you, thank you, thank you. You know, I am just overwhelmed. This is a very good day. And I want to thank all of you, especially the people on this stage, but each and every one of you who have been working so hard on this, members of my staff who worked so hard on this. I couldn't be prouder.

Sixty-six years ago, in the dense, snow-covered forests of Western Europe, Allied Forces were beating back a massive assault in what would become known as the Battle of the Bulge. And in the final days of fighting, a regi-

ment in the 80th Division of Patton's Third Army came under fire. The men were traveling along a narrow trail. They were exposed, and they were vulnerable. Hundreds of soldiers were cut down by the enemy.

And during the firefight, a private named Lloyd Corwin tumbled 40 feet down the deep side of a ravine. And dazed and trapped, he was as good as dead. But one soldier, a friend, turned back. And with shells landing around him, amid smoke and chaos and the screams of wounded men, this soldier, this friend, scaled