

Message to the Senate on the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty May 2, 2011

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith Protocols 1, 2, and 3 to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (“the Treaty”), signed on behalf of the United States at Suva on March 25, 1996. I also transmit for the information of the Senate the Treaty to which these Protocols relate and the Department of State’s Overview of the Protocols, which includes a detailed article-by-article analysis of both the Protocols and the Treaty.

Ratification of Protocols 1, 2, and 3 to the Treaty would fully support U.S. nonproliferation policy and goals, and I am convinced that it is in the best interest of the United States to ratify these Protocols. This step will strengthen

our relations with our South Pacific friends and allies and enhance U.S. security by furthering our global nonproliferation and arms control objectives. As the Overview of the Department of State explains, entry into force of Protocols 1, 2, and 3 for the United States would require no changes in U.S. law, policy, or practice.

I recommend that the Senate give favorable consideration to Protocols 1, 2, and 3 to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty and give its advice and consent to their ratification, subject to the statements described in the Overview of the Department of State.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 2, 2011.

Remarks at a Dinner for Congressional Leaders and Their Spouses May 2, 2011

Thank you, everyone. Please—thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Good evening, all of you. On behalf of Michelle and myself, I just want to welcome everybody to the White House. We scheduled this dinner a few weeks ago because I thought it would be a good opportunity for leaders of both parties and their spouses to spend some time together outside of politics. And tonight seems like an especially fitting occasion to do this.

Obviously, we’ve all had disagreements and differences in the past. I suspect we’ll have them again in the future. But last night, as Americans learned that the United States had carried out an operation that resulted in the capture and death of Usama bin Laden, we—[applause]—goodness, thank you. You know, I think we experienced the same sense of unity that prevailed on 9/11. We were reminded again that there is a pride in what this Nation stands for and what we can achieve, that runs far deeper than party, far deeper than politics.

I want to again recognize the heroes who carried out this incredibly dangerous mission, as well as all the military and counterterrorism professionals who made the mission possible. I also want to thank the Members of Congress from both parties who have given extraordinary support to our military and our intelligence officials. Without your support, they could not do what they do.

I know that that unity that we felt on 9/11 has frayed a little bit over the years, and I have no illusions about the difficulties of the debates that we’ll have to be engaged in, in the weeks and months to come. But I also know there have been several moments like this during the course of this year that have brought us together as an American family, whether it was the tragedy in Tucson, or most recently, our unified response to the terrible storms that have taken place in the South.

Last night was one of those moments. And so tonight it is my fervent hope that we can harness some of that unity and some of that

pride to confront the many challenges that we still face. But to all of you here tonight, we are joyful that you could join us. And please have a little bit of fun. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:03 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization, who was killed in a U.S. Navy SEALs counterterrorism operation in Abbottabad, Pakistan, on May 1.

Remarks Honoring the 2011 National and State Teachers of the Year May 3, 2011

The President. Thank you, everybody. Please, have a seat. Please, have a seat.

What a beautiful day, a wonderful day to celebrate teachers and teaching. I am honored to welcome this group of outstanding teachers behind me to the White House. They are the best of the best. And even though we can never really thank teachers enough, today is a chance to offer them a small token of our appreciation for the difference they make in the lives of our children and the future of our country.

I want to start by acknowledging somebody who I think will end up being one of the greatest Secretaries of Education we've ever had, who could not be more passionate about making sure that our young people get a great start in life, and that's Arne Duncan. Give him a big round of applause.

I am very proud that we've got some wonderful Members of Congress who are here from the great State of Maryland, who I think are pretty proud of you. *[Laughter]*

As I've said before, it's not just the winners of the Super Bowl who deserve to be celebrated. And that's why I also want to welcome the teams from the National Science Bowl who are here with us today. Where are they? There you are, right back there. Good to see you. Secretary Chu told me that you all did a great job this year. So congratulations.

And finally, I want to congratulate our State and national Teachers of the Year.

Now, I'm not sure if you can tell, but it's been a while since I was in school. *[Laughter]* I haven't had to ask for a hall pass in a few years. I think it is important to note—this is off script, but the Teacher of the Year from Hawaii—where is she?—wave—teaches at the first school I ever went to, Noelani School up

in Manoa in Hawaii. So I thought that was pretty cool. *[Laughter]* I went there in first grade. *[Laughter]* It's a wonderful school.

But even after all this time, I still remember the special teachers that touched my life. And we all do. We remember the way they challenged us, the way they made us feel, how they pushed us, the encouragement that they gave us, the values that they taught us, the way they helped us to understand the world and analyze it and ask questions. They helped us become the people that we are today.

For me, one of those people was my fifth grade teacher, Ms. Mabel Hefty. When I walked into Ms. Hefty's classroom for the first time, I was a new kid who had been living overseas for a few years, had a funny name nobody could pronounce. But she didn't let me withdraw into myself. She helped me believe that I had something special to say. She made me feel special. She reinforced the sense of empathy and thoughtfulness that my mother and my grandparents had tried hard to instill in me, and that's a lesson that I still carry with me as President.

Ms. Hefty is no longer with us, but I often think about her and how much of a difference she made in my life. And everybody's got a story like that, about that teacher who made the extra effort to shape our lives in important ways.

What people, I think, don't realize is just how much work and how much sacrifice it takes to make that connection. My sister is a teacher, and so I've had the occasion of just watching her preparing lesson plans and then going out of their—her way to call that student who she thinks has potential but is slipping away, and working with parents who maybe