

This team had nine Pro-Bowlers, four future Hall of Famers—five counting Coach Ditka. They won one 3-game stretch by a combined score of 104–3. And even though they were the youngest team in the NFL at that time, these guys were so confident that Kevin Butler, who was the kicker and still the Bears alltime leading scorer, called his then-fiancée Cathy from training camp in July to say that they had to change their wedding date because that was the Super Bowl day. [Laughter] They were so confident that the day after they lost their only game of the season, they recorded “The Super Bowl Shuffle.” [Laughter] They were suggesting that I should dance “The Super Bowl Shuffle.” Can’t do it. But I do remember it. And in Chicago, you could not get away from this song even if you wanted to. [Laughter] I think it’s safe to say that this is the only team in NFL history with a gold record and a Grammy nomination.

So this team changed everything for every team that came on after, on and off the field. They changed the laws of football. They were gritty, they were gutsy, they were hard-working, they were fun-loving, sort of how Chicagoans like to think of themselves. And Chicago has always been a diehard football town, but this team did something to our city that we’ve never gotten over. We love the Bears. And as much fun as it is to finally have these guys here, we want today’s Bears to come home to the White House with a championship as well.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi of Tunisia and an Exchange With Reporters October 7, 2011

President Obama. Well, it is my great pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Caid Essebsi here to the Oval Office.

As I think all of you know, Tunisia was the first country in the North African-Middle East region to begin this incredible transformation that we now call the Arab Spring. The movement that began with one street vendor protesting and taking his life in response to a government that had not been responsive to hu-

man rights set off a transformation in Tunisia that has now spread to countries throughout the region. As a result, Tunisia has been an inspiration to all of us who believe that each individual, man and woman, has certain inalienable rights, and that those rights must be recognized in a government that is responsive, is democratic, in which free and fair elections can take place, and in which the rights of minorities are protected.

But in the meantime, congratulations to all of you. Thank you for helping to bring our city together. Thank you for the incredible fun that you gave to all of us. Stick around, guys, and enjoy yourselves. But as I mentioned back there, don’t break anything, and keep your eyes on McMahon. [Laughter] All right, Coach?

Former Head Coach Michael K. Ditka. Wait, wait. One second, one second. We want to give the President—

[At this point, the President was presented with a team jersey.]

The President. Hey!

Mr. Ditka. On behalf of the 1985 Chicago Bears, we consider him one of us. It was a great group of guys. We’re very proud that you honored us by bringing us here. It’s only 26 years after the fact, and five administrations, but thank you. [Laughter]

The President. Appreciate it, Coach. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:08 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to New York Jets Head Coach Rex Ryan and Dallas Cowboys Defensive Coordinator Rob Ryan, sons of former Chicago Bears Defensive Coordinator James D. “Buddy” Ryan; and James L. Brown, former fullback, Cleveland Browns.

We are deeply encouraged by the progress that's already been made in this short period of time. In part because of the extraordinary leadership of the Prime Minister, what we've seen is an orderly process that includes constituent assembly elections this month, that will include the writing of a Constitution and fair and free elections both for a new Parliament and a new President.

So given that Tunisia was the first country to undergo the transformation we know as the Arab Spring, and given it is now the first to have elections, we thought it was appropriate that Tunisia would be the first to visit the White House.

The Prime Minister and I had an excellent discussion about both the opportunities and the challenges that Tunisia face going forward and how the United States can be a helpful partner in that process. In particular, we discussed the importance of having an economic transformation that has taken place alongside the political transformation.

The United States has an enormous stake in seeing the success in Tunisia and the creation of greater opportunity and more business investment in Tunisia. And so in addition to the \$39 million that we have already provided in assistance to Tunisia as they make this transformation, we discussed a package that includes loan guarantees, assistance in encouraging trade and foreign investment, a whole range of support programs that will allow Tunisia to create a greater business investment, offer more opportunities for employment to its young people, and further integrate it into the world marketplace.

We also discussed issues regarding the transformation that has taken place in the region as a whole. And I expressed my great admiration and appreciation for the Libyan—for the Tunisian people in the hospitality and kindness that they showed to Libyan refugees during the tumultuous period that has taken place in Libya over the last several months.

Let me just close by pointing out that Tunisia is one of our oldest friends in the world. Tunisia was one of the first countries to recognize the United States of America over 200 years

ago. One of the first trade agreements that we had as a country was with Tunisia. And so I told the Prime Minister that thanks to his leadership, thanks to the extraordinary transformation that's taking place in Tunisia and the courage of its people, I'm confident that we will have at least another two centuries of friendship between our two countries. And the American people will stand by the people of Tunisia in any way that we can during this remarkable period in Tunisian history.

Prime Minister Caïd Essebsi. What could I add? I entirely agree with everything that the President said. But first and foremost, I'm very grateful, first of all, for having been invited by President Obama.

I came here to convey the great satisfaction, the great gratitude of the Tunisian people for the constant support that he provided to the change in the revolution that took place in Tunisia. And in fact, he was the very first person to applaud, to congratulate the change that took place in our country on the 14th of January. And this change, this support, I believe is irreversible. I came here to express to him my personal esteem for him, because he was the first to truly understand the depth, the importance of the changes that were occurring in Tunisia, and also the importance for the entire region.

You spoke about the Arab Spring, but up until now the Arab Spring is only really the "Tunisian Spring." So what I do hope is that this—our spring will not limit itself exclusively to Tunisia, and that it will spread throughout the region, and that, of course, it depends for large part on the economic and political success of Tunisia.

And I'm confident in the success of this process, thanks to the support expressed by President Obama today. And I told him that the longstanding and privileged relations that exist between the United States and Tunisia will not last merely for 200 years, but hopefully, until eternity.

The President mentioned the fact that Tunisia was one of the very first countries to recognize the independence of the United States. I also reminded him of the fact that the United

States was also one of the very first countries to recognize the independence of Tunisia.

At any rate, at the end of this visit I would like to reiterate my thanks to President Obama and assure him that in Tunisia he will always find a credible and sincere friend.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

2011 Nobel Peace Prize Recipients

Q. Mr. President, the women who won the Nobel today, any reaction?

President Obama. The three women who won the Nobel Prize today are all remarkable examples of not only their own determination and spirit, but also a reminder that when we empower women around the world, then ev-

eryone is better off, that the countries and cultures that respect the contributions of women inevitably end up being more successful than those that don't. All right?

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:32 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, Liberian peace activist Leymah Gbowee, and Yemeni human rights activist Tawakkul Karman, recipients of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize. Prime Minister Caid Essebsi spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the 10th Anniversary of the Commencement of United States Military Operations in Afghanistan
October 7, 2011

Ten years ago today, in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, our Nation went to war against Al Qaida and its Taliban protectors in Afghanistan. As we mark a decade of sacrifice, Michelle and I join all Americans in saluting the more than half a million men and women who have served bravely in Afghanistan to keep our country safe, including our resilient wounded warriors who carry the scars of war, seen and unseen. We honor the memory of the nearly 1,800 American patriots and many coalition and Afghan partners who have made the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan for our shared security and freedom. We pay tribute to our inspiring military families who have persevered at home with a loved one at war. And we are grateful to our tireless diplomats and intelligence, homeland security, and law enforcement professionals who have worked these 10 years to protect our country and save American lives.

Thanks to the extraordinary service of these Americans, our citizens are safer and our Nation is more secure. In delivering justice to Usama bin Laden and many other Al Qaida leaders, we are closer than ever to defeating Al Qaida and its murderous network. Despite the enormous challenges that remain in Afghani-

stan, we've pushed the Taliban out of its key strongholds, Afghan security forces are growing stronger, and the Afghan people have a new chance to forge their own future. We've fought alongside Afghans and close friends and allies from dozens of nations who have joined us in common purpose. In Afghanistan and beyond, we have shown that the United States is not and never will be at war with Islam and that we are a partner with those who seek justice, dignity, and opportunity.

After a difficult decade, we are responsibly ending today's wars from a position of strength. As the rest of our troops come home from Iraq this year, we have begun to draw down our forces in Afghanistan and transition security to the Afghan people, with whom we will forge an enduring partnership. As our sons and daughters come home to their families, we will uphold our sacred trust with our 9/11 generation veterans and work to provide the care, benefits, and opportunities they deserve. And as we reflect on 10 years of war and look ahead to a future of peace, Michelle and I call upon all Americans to show our gratitude and support for our fellow citizens who risk their lives so that we can enjoy the blessings of freedom and security.