

willingness, we the people, to take on the mantle of citizenship—you are marching.

And that's the lesson of our past. That's the promise of tomorrow: that in the face of impossible odds, people who love their country can change it. That when millions of Americans of every race and every region, every faith and every station, can join together in a spirit of brotherhood, then those mountains will be made low and those rough places will be made plain and those crooked

places, they straighten out towards grace, and we will vindicate the faith of those who sacrificed so much and live up to the true meaning of our creed, as one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:07 p.m. at the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall. In his remarks, he referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

Statement on the Appointment of Donald E. Booth as United States Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan

August 28, 2013

Today I am pleased to announce the appointment of Ambassador Donald Booth as the new U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan. Ambassador Booth is one of America's most experienced diplomats, with broad experience helping promote peace and prevent conflict across Africa, including most recently as our Ambassador to Ethiopia. With his considerable diplomatic talents, deep knowledge of the continent, and unwavering determination, I am confident that Ambassador Booth will advance U.S. interests in pursuing a durable and lasting peace between and within Sudan and South Sudan.

As my envoy, Ambassador Booth will spearhead U.S. efforts to press the parties to implement last year's September 27 agreements and resolve their outstanding issues, including with respect to borders, the final status of Abyei, and ensuring the uninterrupted flow of oil. He will also lead our efforts to bring the conflicts in Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan, and Darfur to a peaceful end and to promote inclusive governance and full respect for human rights in both states.

Much work remains, but we know that when the governments of Sudan and South Sudan show political courage and put the interests of their people first, peace and progress are possible.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Toomas Hendrik Ilves of Estonia, President Dalia Grybauskaitė of Lithuania, and President Andris Berzins of Latvia and an Exchange With Reporters

August 30, 2013

President Obama. Well, obviously, I'm very grateful to have my fellow Presidents here, as well as the Vice President. Before I begin, I want to say a few words about the situation in Syria.

As you've seen, today we've released our unclassified assessment, detailing with high confidence that the Syrian regime carried out a chemical weapons attack that killed well over 1,000 people, including hundreds of children.

This follows the horrific images that shocked us all.

This kind of attack is a challenge to the world. We cannot accept a world where women and children and innocent civilians are gassed on a terrible scale. This kind of attack threatens our national security interests by violating well-established international norms against the use of chemical weapons, by further threatening friends and allies of ours in the region, like Isra-

el and Turkey and Jordan. And it increases the risk that chemical weapons will be used in the future and fall into the hands of terrorists who might use them against us.

So I have said before—and I meant what I said—that the world has an obligation to make sure that we maintain the norm against the use of chemical weapons. Now, I have not made a final decision about various actions that might be taken to help enforce that norm. But as I've already said, I have had my military and our team look at a wide range of options. We have consulted with allies. We've consulted with Congress. We've been in conversations with all the interested parties.

And in no event are we considering any kind of military action that would involve boots on the ground, that would involve a long-term campaign. But we are looking at the possibility of a limited, narrow act that would help make sure that not only Syria, but others around the world, understand that the international community cares about maintaining this chemical weapons ban and norm.

So again, I repeat, we're not considering any open-ended commitment. We're not considering any boots-on-the-ground approach. What we will do is consider options that meet the narrow concern around chemical weapons, understanding that there's not going to be a solely military solution to the underlying conflict and tragedy that's taking place in Syria. And I will continue to consult closely with Congress.

In addition to the release of the unclassified document, we are providing a classified briefing to congressional staffs today, and we'll offer that same classified briefing to Members of Congress as well as our international partners. And I will continue to provide updates to the American people as we get more information.

With that, I want to welcome Presidents Ilves, President Grybauskaitė, and President Berzins to the White House. These countries that they represent all share very deep ties to the United States, both as allies and because of the extraordinary people-to-people relations that we have with these countries.

I want to thank all the Presidents who are here and their nations for all that they do to

promote democracy not only in their own countries, but around the world. The Baltics are among our most reliable allies in NATO, and our commitment to their security is rock solid. Our soldiers sacrifice together in Afghanistan, and the Baltic ports continue to help support our troops as we transition the NATO mission.

Today we're going to spend some time talking about shared commitments to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations, which will add jobs in the Baltics and the United States. We're working on development assistance projects, including building institutions and strengthening civil society in the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. We will obviously have discussions about our NATO relationship and the security concerns that we share together.

So again, I've had occasions to meet with all three Presidents on a—in a wide variety of settings and wide variety of summits. They have been outstanding friends to the United States of America. We are very proud of them. And I want to thank each of them for their leadership. We know how far Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have come in just the past two decades, and I know that we'll accomplish even more in the decades to come.

So with that, I want to give each of these leaders a chance to say a few words. We're going to start with President Ilves.

President Ilves. Thank you. I'd actually like to begin by thanking President Obama for inviting us here, and we are quite grateful to the United States and to you personally for your leadership, commitment, and support.

The main issue on our agenda today is global and regional security, and the question, of course, on everyone's mind is the situation in Syria. For Estonia, the use of chemical weapons is deplorable. The attack demands a response. Those responsible must be held accountable. Violations cannot be overlooked.

When it comes to our security, we appreciate the commitment that the United States has shown to our region and Europe as a whole, and we attach great importance to continued U.S. engagement in European security.

The transatlantic security link is unique and enduring, as are the common values that underpin it. As a NATO ally, Estonia takes its responsibility to our common defense seriously. We are currently and will maintain committed to NATO's mission in Afghanistan. We spend 2 percent of our GDP on defense.

We also believe in maintaining a strong transatlantic link in other areas, such as trade, cyber and energy security. I look forward to exchanging views on all of these issues, as I also look forward to discussing what we can do together internationally to promote our common values: democracy, human rights, rule of law.

We already cooperate in countries that lie to the east and the south of us: Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, Tunisia as well, just to name a few. I am sure that this global cooperation aimed at helping countries transition from authoritarian to democratic rule will be expanded in the future.

Recently, we've heard a lot of talk about pivots. Today, we are on the verge of a new rebalancing of the U.S. focus, this time to the Nordic-Baltic region. Our region is one of the most secure, stable, and prosperous in Europe. We are proud to be part of it. We are proud of the partnership we have with the United States here, and—just as we are proud of our alliance and our enduring—the enduring friendship of the American people.

President Obama. Madam President.

President Grybauskaitė. So adding in line, I would like to emphasize that to go with the military security in the region, we are talking about economic security in the region. And here, especially on energy security, United States plays very serious role.

We opened in our region already, in Vilnius, the NATO Center of Excellence for Energy Security and, bilaterally with United States, the Center for Nuclear Security. And this is important because we are on the borders of NATO with some other not-so-secured regions, and why this involvement of the United States is so important for all of our region.

And of course, as a country which presides today the European Union's Council, we are engaged very much in starting negotiations on

free trade agreement between the United States and European Union. And I'm very happy that we got one meeting, and now we waiting in October for second one. And I think that it is a generational challenge and opportunity for all of us—for United States and Europe—to have—move fast these kinds of relations and to have very efficient and resultative outcome. And I hope that we will be able to do it fast.

So together with the military new challenges, we're trying to battle new economic challenges together with the cyber challenges, which our region all the time receives and receives. And I want to say that every day, every day practically, we see this aggressiveness and new forms of challenges our region is facing, so why? I just can also confirm that Baltic and Nordic cooperation is a new phenomena—I would say unique phenomena—in Europe, which is very much reliable, and you can count on us as being—we are a strategic partners for United States.

President Obama. Mr. President.

[At this point, President Berzins spoke briefly in Latvian, and no translation was provided. He then spoke in English as follows.]

President Berzins. This week is important for American people: 50th anniversary of March in Washington. As I say, for us, this is 15 years—15 years over—when Baltic-American Charter was signed. This is right moment to review and to move forward.

For us, we are really thankful to you during your Presidential time, which have already permanent Baltic, their policing mission—regularly U.S.-led military exercises in Baltics strengthen Nordic—the distribution network to Afghanistan. British-American Freedom Fund, which helps let Baltic students to study in American universities.

Of course, we see future together, at the same time being very active in Europe—we will become members of euro zone the 1st of January. We are actually working—thank you for supporting—to become members of OECD. And of course, our focus is to look for new possibilities in Europe and using our past experience. We are focusing to Central Asian

countries and also to Eastern Partnership countries. And this is particularly important in relations to Afghanistan and to develop this country, already peaceful manner.

Latvia has past crisis, but in the same time, we are have to do much, much more. And having this really good NATO support and such partners as U.S., we can move forward quietly. And it's clear that today meeting is a recent demonstration of the stable, long-term interest of the United States in Baltics and Europe: proud, free, and at peace.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you so much.

U.S. Response to the Situation in Syria

Q. Mr. President, is your decision on Syria imminent? And why did you feel like it's appropriate to move forward without formal authorization from either the United Nations or Congress, particularly given that the British Parliament had an opportunity to vote?

President Obama. We are still in the planning processes. And obviously, consultations with Congress as well as the international community are very important. And my preference obviously would have been that the international community already acted forcefully. But what we have seen, so far at least, is an incapacity at this point for the Security Council to move forward in the face of a clear violation of international norms.

And I recognize that all of us—here in the United States, in Great Britain, and many parts of the world—there is a certain weariness given Afghanistan; there's a certain suspicion of any military action post-Iraq. And I very much appreciate that. On the other hand, it's important for us to recognize that when over a thousand people are killed, including hundreds of innocent children, through the use of a weapon that 98 or 99 percent of humanity says should not be used even in war, and there is no action, then we're sending a signal that that international norm doesn't mean much. And that is a danger to our national security.

And obviously, if and when we make a decision to respond, there are a whole host of considerations that I have to take into account too,

in terms of how effective it is. And given the kinds of options that we're looking at, that would be very limited and would not involve a long-term commitment or a major operation.

We are confident that we can provide Congress all the information and get all the input that they need, and we're very mindful of that. And we can have serious conversations with our allies and our friends around the world about this. But ultimately, we don't want the world to be paralyzed.

And frankly, part of the challenge that we end up with here is that a lot of people think something should be done, but nobody wants to do it. And that's not an unusual situation. And that's part of what allows, over time, the erosion of these kinds of international prohibitions, unless somebody says: No, when the world says we're not going to use chemical weapons, we mean it.

And it would be tempting to leave it to others to do it. And I've already—I think I've shown consistently and said consistently my strong preference for multilateral action whenever possible. But it is not in the national security interests of the United States to ignore clear violations of these kinds of international norms.

And the reason is because there are a whole host of international norms out there that are very important to us. We have currently rules in place dealing with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We have international norms that have been violated by certain countries, and the United Nations has put sanctions in place. But if there's a sense that over time nobody is willing to actually enforce them, then people won't take them seriously.

So I'm very clear that the world generally is war weary. Certainly, the United States has gone through over a decade of war. The American people, understandably, want us to be focused on the business of rebuilding our economy here and putting people back to work. And I assure you, nobody ends up being more war weary than me.

Q. Mr. President.

President Obama. But what I also believe is that part of our obligation as a leader in the world

is making sure that when you have a regime that is willing to use weapons that are prohibited by international norms on their own people, including children, that they are held to account.

Thank you, everyone.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Joint Statement by President Obama, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves of Estonia, President Andris Berzins of Latvia, and President Dalia Grybauskaitė of Lithuania
August 30, 2013

The United States of America, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia, and the Republic of Lithuania reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our relations by jointly expanding trade ties in pursuit of economic prosperity, enhancing strategic cooperation to address global security challenges, and advancing democracy and human rights around the world. As NATO allies, bound by our shared transatlantic values and holding a common vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace, we resolve to continue and expand our cooperation in the Baltic region and beyond to build a more prosperous, secure, and inclusive future.

The Baltic states have each undergone significant transformations since the restoration of independence just over two decades ago. Fulfilling the promise of the 1998 Baltic Charter, they have become valued members of NATO and the European Union. In joining the ranks of the world's most developed economies in organizations such as OECD and the Eurozone, and assuming the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, their positive influence on global security and economic issues continues to grow.

As we prepare for the opportunities and challenges that will arise in the coming years, we recognize that cooperation—with and among the Baltic states, with other regional partners such as the Nordics, and in transatlantic and international forums—will be crucial to our success. To this end, we have a shared interest in further developing cooperative, mutually respectful relations with all states in the region. We are stronger and our reach is greater when we work collaboratively and combine efforts in pursuit of our common goals.

We recognize and reaffirm our commitment to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) negotiations as a generational opportunity to expand the strong cultural and economic ties between Europe and the United States. T-TIP will not only establish a high-standard, comprehensive agreement that will strengthen the global trading system, but it will also promote competitiveness and growth, adding to the millions of jobs—including Baltic and American jobs—that are already supported by trade and investment across the Atlantic.

As a reliable and diverse supply of energy is a crucial element of economic prosperity, we reaffirm our commitment to strengthening energy security in the Baltic region. We recognize the importance of implementing the EU's Third Energy Directive and developing the projects included in the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan, in order to diversify sources of energy, develop transparency in energy markets, and provide the basis for sustained economic growth in the entire region. The United States strongly supports the Baltic states in their efforts to develop domestic energy resources and clean energy solutions—including energy efficiency—in pursuit of our shared goals of strengthening energy security, addressing climate change, and promoting nuclear safety and security.

Recognizing the benefits and risks of our increasing dependence on information technology and cyberspace, we will strengthen our engagement on cyber issues regionally and globally. We will seek to advance the cybersecurity of critical infrastructure in the region through public/private cooperation. We will continue to cooperate in the investigation and prosecution of cyber-

crimes. We will strive to advance our shared vision of internet freedom by engaging with other countries, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector. Our efforts support a common goal: an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable Internet that protects privacy and civil liberties, enables the free flow of information and ideas, and promotes the innovation essential to modern economies.

The security of the United States and Europe is indivisible. As established in the Baltic Charter, and as NATO allies, the United States has a profound and enduring interest in the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The Baltic states make significant contributions to NATO missions in Afghanistan and elsewhere, and we are committed to maintaining and expanding Alliance capabilities—for collective defense, cooperative security, and crisis management—within Europe and beyond. Recognizing the value of practical cooperation, we will work together to find efficiencies and make the most of limited resources. We will coordinate within NATO to identify and develop high-priority capabilities and training and exercise opportunities, while also pursuing regional joint procurement and other security projects where mutually beneficial.

As NATO transitions to a post-2014 non-combat mission in Afghanistan, it will be crucial to maintain the Alliance's ability to provide for collective defense and contribute to global security. Though economic times are challenging, we must all ensure that we sustain adequate levels of defense investment to maintain

a capable, deployable, and interoperable force. In this regard, we reaffirm our commitment to achieve or maintain defense spending at 2 percent of GDP.

In the last two decades, the Baltic states have undertaken impressive democratic transitions, and they now demonstrate leadership in promoting democracy and human rights and strengthening civil society in the countries of the EU's Eastern Partnership, as well as through development assistance to other nations undergoing transition. We will seek opportunities to expand upon these efforts—together, and also with like-minded countries in the region—so the Baltic states can share their successful transition experiences with emerging democracies around the world.

Reflecting our close ties and shared values, we reaffirm our commitment to continue to promote the rule of law as a foundation for a community of free and democratic nations, and to the responsibility of all societies to safeguard and respect the universal rights, civil liberties, and human dignity of all individuals within their territories.

The Baltic states remain grateful to the United States and the American people for their non-recognition policy during the Cold War. Our warm relations are anchored by close interpersonal ties and the rich contributions that the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian diasporas have made to the multi-ethnic culture of the United States.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on an Alternate Pay Plan for Members of the Uniformed Services

August 30, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am transmitting an alternative plan for monthly basic pay increases for members of the uniformed services for 2014.

I am strongly committed to supporting our uniformed service members, who have made

such great contributions to our Nation over the past decade of war. As our country continues to recover from serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare, however, we must maintain efforts to keep our Nation on a sustainable fiscal course. This effort requires tough choices, especially in light of

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budget constraints faced by Federal agencies.

Accordingly, I have determined it is appropriate to exercise my authority under section 1009(e) of title 37, United States Code, to set the 2014 monthly basic pay increase at 1.0 percent. This decision is consistent with my fiscal year 2014 Budget and will not materially affect the Federal Government's ability to attract and retain well-qualified members for the uniformed services.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on an Alternate Pay Plan for Civilian Federal Employees

August 30, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am transmitting an alternative plan for pay increases for civilian Federal employees covered by the General Schedule (GS) and certain other pay systems for 2014.

Civilian Federal employees have already made significant sacrifices as a result of a three-year pay freeze. As our country continues to recover from serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare, however, we must maintain efforts to keep our Nation on a sustainable fiscal course.

Accordingly, I have determined that it is appropriate to exercise my statutory alternative plan authority under 5 U.S.C. 5303(b) and 5304a to set alternative 2014 across-the-board and locality pay adjustments. Specifically, I have determined that for 2014, across-the-

The adjustments described above shall take effect on the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2014.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

board pay increases will be 1.0 percent, and the current locality pay percentages shown in Schedule 9 of Executive Order 13641 of April 5, 2013, will remain at their 2013 levels. This decision will not materially affect the Federal Government's ability to attract and retain a well-qualified Federal workforce.

The adjustments described above shall take effect on the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2014.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

The President's Weekly Address

August 31, 2013

Hi, everybody. This Labor Day weekend, as we gather with family and friends, we'll also come together as a nation to honor some of our own: the working men and women of America who, across the generations, built this country up and helped make us who we are today.

On Monday, we'll celebrate that proud history. We'll pay tribute to the values working Americans embody: hard work, responsibility,

sacrifice, looking out for one another. And we also need to recommit ourselves to their cause; to securing for them a better bargain so that everyone who works hard in America has a chance to get ahead.

You see, over the past 4½ years, we've fought our way back from the worst recession of our lifetimes. And thanks to the grit and resilience of the American people, we've begun to lay a

foundation for stronger, more durable economic growth. But as any working family will tell you, we're not yet where we need to be.

For over a decade, working Americans have seen their wages and incomes stagnate, even as corporate profits soar and the pay of a fortunate few explodes. For even longer than that, inequality has steadily risen; the journey of upward mobility has become harder. And in too many communities across this country, the shadow of poverty continues to cast a pall over our fellow citizens.

Reversing that trend needs to be Washington's highest priority. And it sure is mine. That's why, over the past month, I've traveled all across America, laying out my ideas for how we can build on the cornerstones of what it means to be middle class: a good job that pays a good wage; a good education; a home of your own; health care when you get sick; a secure retirement even if you're not rich; and more chances for folks to earn their way into the middle class as long as they're willing to work for it.

The truth is, it's not going to be easy to reverse the forces that have conspired for de-

cares against working Americans. But if we take a few bold steps, and if Washington is able to come together with common purpose and common resolve, we'll get there. Our economy will keep getting stronger, and more Americans will be able to join the ranks of the middle class.

So this Labor Day, while you're out there grilling in the backyard or taking the final trip for the summer, I hope you'll also take a moment to reflect on the many contributions of our working men and women. For generations, it was the great American middle class that made our economy the envy of the world. And as long as I'm President, I'm going to keep fighting to make sure that happens again.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:05 p.m. on August 30 in the East Room at the White House for broadcast on August 31. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 30, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 31.

Remarks on the Situation in Syria *August 31, 2013*

Good afternoon, everybody. Ten days ago, the world watched in horror as men, women and children were massacred in Syria in the worst chemical weapons attack of the 21st century. Yesterday the United States presented a powerful case that the Syrian Government was responsible for this attack on its own people.

Our intelligence shows the Asad regime and its forces preparing to use chemical weapons, launching rockets in the highly populated suburbs of Damascus, and acknowledging that a chemical weapons attack took place. And all of this corroborates what the world can plainly see: hospitals overflowing with victims, terrible images of the dead. All told, well over 1,000 people were murdered. Several hundred of them were children: young girls and boys gassed to death by their own Government.

Now, this attack is an assault on human dignity. It also presents a serious danger to our national security. It risks making a mockery of the global prohibition on the use of chemical weapons. It endangers our friends and our partners along Syria's borders, including Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq. It could lead to escalating use of chemical weapons or their proliferation to terrorist groups who would do our people harm. In a world with many dangers, this menace must be confronted.

Now, after careful deliberation, I have decided that the United States should take military action against Syrian regime targets. This would not be an open-ended intervention. We would not put boots on the ground. Instead, our action would be designed to be limited in duration and scope. But I'm confident we can hold the Asad regime accountable for their use

of chemical weapons, deter this kind of behavior, and degrade their capacity to carry it out.

Our military has positioned assets in the region. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs has informed me that we are prepared to strike whenever we choose. Moreover, the Chairman has indicated to me that our capacity to execute this mission is not time sensitive; it will be effective tomorrow or next week or 1 month from now. And I'm prepared to give that order.

But having made my decision as Commander in Chief based on what I am convinced is our national security interests, I'm also mindful that I'm the President of the world's oldest constitutional democracy. I've long believed that our power is rooted not just in our military might, but in our example as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. And that's why I've made a second decision: I will seek authorization for the use of force from the American people's representatives in Congress.

Over the last several days, we've heard from Members of Congress who want their voices to be heard. I absolutely agree. So this morning I spoke with all four congressional leaders, and they've agreed to schedule a debate and then a vote as soon as Congress comes back into session.

In the coming days, my administration stands ready to provide every Member with the information they need to understand what happened in Syria and why it has such profound implications for America's national security. And all of us should be accountable as we move forward, and that can only be accomplished with a vote.

I'm confident in the case our Government has made without waiting for U.N. inspectors. I'm comfortable going forward without the approval of a United Nations Security Council that, so far, has been completely paralyzed and unwilling to hold Assad accountable. As a consequence, many people have advised against taking this decision to Congress, and undoubtedly, they were impacted by what we saw happen in the United Kingdom this week when the Parliament of our closest ally failed to pass

a resolution with a similar goal, even as the Prime Minister supported taking action.

Yet while I believe I have the authority to carry out this military action without specific congressional authorization, I know that the country will be stronger if we take this course, and our actions will be even more effective. We should have this debate, because the issues are too big for business as usual. And this morning, John Boehner, Harry Reid, Nancy Pelosi, and Mitch McConnell agreed that this is the right thing to do for our democracy.

A country faces few decisions as grave as using military force, even when that force is limited. I respect the views of those who call for caution, particularly as our country emerges from a time of war that I was elected, in part, to end. But if we really do want to turn away from taking appropriate action in the face of such an unspeakable outrage, then we must acknowledge the costs of doing nothing.

Here's my question for every Member of Congress and every member of the global community: What message will we send if a dictator can gas hundreds of children to death in plain sight and pay no price? What's the purpose of the international system that we've built if a prohibition on the use of chemical weapons that has been agreed to by the governments of 98 percent of the world's people and approved overwhelmingly by the Congress of the United States is not enforced?

Make no mistake, this has implications beyond chemical warfare. If we won't enforce accountability in the face of this heinous act, what does it say about our resolve to stand up to others who flout fundamental international rules? To governments who would choose to build nuclear arms? To terrorists who would spread biological weapons? To armies who carry out genocide? We cannot raise our children in a world where we will not follow through on the things we say, the accords we sign, the values that define us.

So just as I will take this case to Congress, I will also deliver this message to the world. While the U.N. investigation has some time to report on its findings, we will insist that an

atrocities committed with chemical weapons is not simply investigated, it must be confronted.

I don't expect every nation to agree with the decision we have made. Privately, we've heard many expressions of support from our friends. But I will ask those who care about the writ of the international community to stand publicly behind our action.

And finally, let me say this to the American people: I know well that we are weary of war. We've ended one war in Iraq. We're ending another in Afghanistan. And the American people have the good sense to know we cannot resolve the underlying conflict in Syria with our military. In that part of the world, there are ancient sectarian differences, and the hopes of the Arab Spring have unleashed forces of change that are going to take many years to resolve. And that's why we're not contemplating putting our troops in the middle of someone else's war.

Instead, we'll continue to support the Syrian people through our pressure on the Assad regime, our commitment to the opposition, our care for the displaced, and our pursuit of a political resolution that achieves a government that respects the dignity of its people.

But we are the United States of America, and we cannot and must not turn a blind eye to what happened in Damascus. Out of the ashes of world war, we built an international order and enforced the rules that gave it meaning. And we did so because we believe that the rights of individuals to live in peace and dignity depends on the responsibilities of nations. We aren't perfect, but this Nation more than any other has been willing to meet those responsibilities.

So to all Members of Congress of both parties, I ask you to take this vote for our national security. I am looking forward to the debate. And in doing so, I ask you, Members of Congress, to consider that some things are more important than partisan differences or the politics of the moment.

Ultimately, this is not about who occupies this office at any given time, it's about who we are as a country. I believe that the people's representatives must be invested in what America does abroad, and now is the time to show the world that America keeps our commitments. We do what we say. And we lead with the belief that right makes might, not the other way around.

We all know there are no easy options. But I wasn't elected to avoid hard decisions. And neither were the Members of the House and the Senate. I've told you what I believe, that our security and our values demand that we cannot turn away from the massacre of countless civilians with chemical weapons. And our democracy is stronger when the President and the people's representatives stand together.

I'm ready to act in the face of this outrage. Today I'm asking Congress to send a message to the world that we are ready to move forward together as one Nation.

Thanks very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:52 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting Draft Legislation Regarding Authorization for Use of United States Armed Forces in Connection With the Conflict in Syria

August 31, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Sincerely,

I transmit herewith the attached draft legislation regarding Authorization for Use of United States Armed Forces in connection with the conflict in Syria.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of

Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The Office of the Press Secretary also released the text of the draft legislation.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders on the Situation in Syria and an Exchange With Reporters *September 3, 2013*

The President. I want to thank the leaders of both parties for being here today to discuss what is a very serious issue facing the United States. And the fact that I've had a chance to speak to many of you and Congress as a whole is taking this issue with the soberness and seriousness that it deserves is greatly appreciated and, I think, vindicates the decision for us to present this issue to Congress.

As I've said last week, as Secretary Kerry made clear in his presentation last week, we have high confidence that Syria used, in an indiscriminate fashion, chemical weapons that killed thousands of people, including over 400 children, and in direct violation of the international norm against using chemical weapons. That poses a serious national security threat to the United States and to the region, and as a consequence, Asad and Syria needs to be held accountable.

I've made a decision that America should take action. But I also believe that we will be much more effective, we will be stronger, if we take action together as one Nation. And so this gives us an opportunity not only to present the evidence to all of the leading Members of Congress and their various foreign policy committees as to why we have high confidence that chemical weapons were used and that Asad used them, but it also gives us an opportunity to discuss why it's so important that he be held to account.

This norm against using chemical weapons that 98 percent of the world agrees to is there for a reason, because we recognize that there are certain weapons that, when used, can not only end up resulting in grotesque deaths, but also can end up being transmitted to nonstate actors, can pose a risk to allies and friends of ours like Israel, like Jordan, like Turkey, and unless we hold them into account, also sends a

message that international norms around issues like nuclear proliferation don't mean much.

And so I'm going to be working with Congress. We have sent up a draft authorization. We are going to be asking for hearings and a prompt vote. And I'm very appreciative that everybody here has already begun to schedule hearings and intends to take a vote as soon as can—as all of Congress comes back early next week.

So the key point that I want to emphasize to the American people: The military plan that has been developed by our Joint Chiefs—and that I believe is appropriate—is proportional. It is limited. It does not involve boots on the ground. This is not Iraq, and this is not Afghanistan.

This is a limited, proportional step that will send a clear message not only to the Asad regime, but also to other countries that may be interested in testing some of these international norms, that there are consequences. It gives us the ability to degrade Asad's capabilities when it comes to chemical weapons. It also fits into a broader strategy that we have to make sure that we can bring about, over time, the kind of strengthening of the opposition and the diplomatic and economic and political pressure required so that ultimately we have a transition that can bring peace and stability not only to Syria, but to the region.

But I want to emphasize once again: What we are envisioning is something limited. It is something proportional. It will degrade Asad's capabilities. At the same time, we have a broader strategy that will allow us to upgrade the capabilities of the opposition, allow Syria ultimately to free itself from the kinds of terrible civil wars and death and activity that we've been seeing on the ground.

So I look forward to listening to the various concerns of the Members who are here today. I am confident that those concerns can be addressed. I think it is appropriate that we act deliberately, but I also think everybody recognizes the urgency here and that we're going to have to move relatively quickly.

So with that, to all of you here today, I look forward to an excellent discussion.

Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force

Q. Mr. President, are you prepared to rewrite the authorization, and does that undercut any of your authority, sir?

The President. I would not be going to Congress if I wasn't serious about consultations and

believing that by shaping the authorization to make sure we accomplish the mission we will be more effective. And so long as we are accomplishing what needs to be accomplished, which is to send a clear message to Assad, degrading his capabilities to use chemical weapons, not just now, but also in the future, as long as the authorization allows us to do that, I'm confident that we're going to be able to come up with something that hits that mark.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:51 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister John Fredrik Reinfeldt of Sweden in Stockholm, Sweden September 4, 2013

Prime Minister Reinfeldt. So it's a great honor and pleasure for me to welcome President Barack Obama to Sweden. As you all know, this is a historic event: the first bilateral visit ever by a President of United States to Sweden.

We have had a very constructive meeting. There are many reasons why the relationship between the United States and Sweden is special. Many Swedes emigrated to the United States at the end of the 19th century, and somewhere around 4 million Americans today claim Swedish heritage. Business ties flourish between our two countries. Sweden is, in fact, one of the largest investors per capita in the U.S., and we have considerable American investments in Sweden. The United States is the most important foreign employer in our country.

Our societies are founded on the same core values: democracy, respect for human rights, and rule of law. All these values are at the heart of the deeds of Raoul Wallenberg, and I'm looking forward to the possibility to pay tribute to Raoul Wallenberg this afternoon, a man who chose not to be indifferent and who saved

thousands of Hungarian Jews from the Holocaust.

United States and Sweden also share ambitions when it comes to the opening of global trade flows. Trade has laid the foundation of Sweden's wealth and prosperity. Around 50 percent of our GDP comes from exports, and Sweden strongly supports open trade regimes and in particular free trade agreement now being negotiated between the European Union and the United States. This will not only bring more jobs and growth to both our continents, it will also strengthen our political and economic partnership.

We also touched upon the economic situation in Europe and in the United States. I mentioned that the crisis has hit countries in Europe differently, Sweden being one of those countries that has done relatively well during the crisis. But the need for structural reforms exists throughout Europe to stay competitive and, at the same time, preserving all our welfare ambitions.

We have also discussed climate change and its consequences. It represents one of the most important challenges to our societies. Sweden

has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent since 1990, while GDP at the same time has increased by 60 percent. So there is no contradiction between economic growth and the protection of environment.

I welcome President Obama's ambitious new climate action plan. U.S. emissions have in recent years already fallen substantially, and your new plan will help United States to make even further reductions. We have agreed to work together in the international climate negotiations to make sure that other countries also are prepared to cut their emissions. This is the only way that we can protect our environment.

We have discussed a few foreign policy issues as well, the most topical, of course, being the situation in Syria. Sweden condemns the use of chemical weapons in Syria in the strongest possible terms. It's a clear violation of international law. Those responsible should be held accountable. Sweden believes that serious matters concerning international peace and security should be handled by the United Nations. But I also understand the potential consequences of letting a violation like this go unanswered. In the long term, I know that we both agree that the situation in Syria needs a political solution.

So thank you once again, Mr. President, for coming to Sweden. I look forward to our program together this afternoon.

Please.

The President. Thank you so much. *Hej.* [Laughter] I've just exhausted my Swedish. [Laughter]

Thank you so much, Prime Minister Reinfeldt, for your very kind words and welcoming me today. I'm proud to be making the first-ever bilateral visit by a U.S. President to Sweden.

It's only been a short time, but I already want to thank all the people here for the warm hospitality that's been extended to me and my delegation. This is truly one of the world's great cities. It is spectacularly beautiful. The Prime Minister tells me that the weather is like this year round. [Laughter] And so like so many who have come here, I feel Stockholm in my heart, and I'm sure that I'll want to bring

back my family to have a visit sometime in the future.

I've said before that it's no accident that democracies are America's closest partners. And that includes Sweden. That's why I'm here today. As free peoples, we recognize that democracy is the most effective form of government ever devised for delivering progress and opportunity and prosperity and freedom to people. And as two of the most innovative economies on Earth, we cherish that freedom that allows us to innovate and create, which is why we're leaders in science and research and development, those things that pioneers new industries and broaden our horizons.

We share a belief in the dignity and equality of every human being: that our daughters deserve the same opportunities as our sons; that our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters must be treated equally under the law; that our societies are strengthened and not weakened by diversity. And we stand up for universal human rights, not only in America and in Europe, but beyond, because we believe that when these rights are respected, nations are more successful and our world is safer and more just.

So I want to thank Sweden and the Swedish people for being such strong partners in pursuit of these values that we share. The partnership is rooted in deep friendship, but as was also mentioned, we have very strong people-to-people ties. My hometown of Chicago has a lot of people from—of Swedish descent. Vice President Biden was honored to welcome King Gustaf and Queen Silvia to the United States earlier this year to mark the 375th anniversary of the first Swedish colony in America, and I'm looking forward to visiting with the King and Queen tomorrow.

I should mention on behalf of hockey fans back home in Chicago, I have to say how grateful our championship Blackhawks are for their several teammates who hail from Sweden. So that's been an excellent export that we gladly accept. [Laughter]

I had a chance to visit with Prime Minister Reinfeldt in the White House during my first year in office. And he has always proved to be a thoughtful and deliberative partner on a whole

host of international issues, and I'm pleased that we've been able to strengthen that partnership in our discussions here today.

We, of course, discussed the appalling violence being inflicted on the Syrian people by the Asad regime, including the horrific chemical weapons attacks 2 weeks ago. I discussed our assessment, which clearly implicates the Syrian Government in this outrage. The Prime Minister and I are in agreement that in the face of such barbarism the international community cannot be silent and that failing to respond to this attack would only increase the risk of more attacks and the possibility that other countries would use these weapons as well.

I respect—and I've said this to the Prime Minister—the U.N. process. Obviously, the U.N. investigation team has done heroic work under very difficult circumstances. But we believe very strongly, with high confidence, that, in fact, chemical weapons were used and that Mr. Asad was the source. And we want to join with the international community in an effective response that deters such use in the future.

So I updated the Prime Minister on our efforts to secure congressional authorization for taking action as well as our effort to continue to build international support for holding the Asad regime accountable in order to deter these kinds of attacks in the future.

And we also discussed our broader strategy. The United States and Sweden are both major donors of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people. We will continue those efforts. We're going to continue to try to strengthen the capabilities of an inclusive and representative opposition and to support the diplomacy that could bring an end to all the violence and advance a political transition and a future in Syria where all people's rights are upheld. Those are goals that we share. And we will keep working towards those goals.

And more broadly, given Sweden's close partnership with NATO, we also touched on some of the other security challenges, and I expressed my appreciation for the extraordinary work that the Swedish Armed Forces has done

in a whole range of issues, including Afghanistan, efforts to resolve some of the conflicts in central Eastern Europe, and the ongoing training that's also being provided and the good example that's being provided by Swedish Armed Forces here in Europe.

Mindful of the jobs that are supported by trade between our two countries, we discussed ways to partner more, including creating a clean energy partnership that creates jobs and combats climate change effectively. Sweden is obviously an extraordinary leader when it comes to tackling climate change and increasing energy efficiency and developing new technologies. And the goal of achieving a carbon-neutral economy is remarkable, and Sweden is well on its way. We deeply respect and admire that and think we can learn from it.

In the United States, we've taken some historic steps—doubling our electricity from wind and solar, improving the fuel efficiency of our cars, reducing our carbon pollution to the lowest levels in nearly 20 years—but we all know we need to do more. So my new climate action plan—more clean energy, more energy efficiency, less emissions—will allow us to do even more in the years to come. And we look forward to a close partnership with Sweden on what is going to be a global challenge. And at the Royal Institute of Technology today, I look forward to seeing some of the innovative ways that we can cooperate.

We also talked about trade and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or T-TIP. I want to thank Sweden and the Prime Minister for the strong support of these negotiations, and I believe that for the U.S. and the EU to reach a high-standard, comprehensive agreement can create more jobs and opportunity on both sides of the Atlantic.

And as I head into the G-20, I shared my view that here in Europe and around the world, we've got to stay focused on creating jobs and growth. That's going to be critically important not only for our economies, but also to maintain stability in many of our democracies that are under severe stress at this point.

And finally, I want to salute Sweden, along with all the Nordic countries, for your strong

support for democracy and development: strengthening democratic governance in Eastern Europe; global efforts against AIDS, TB, and malaria; responsible development in Africa.

I want to thank in advance the Prime Minister for hosting our meeting tonight with the leaders of all the Nordic countries, and I look forward to our discussions.

So to Prime Minister Reinfeldt, thank you so much for your hospitality. To the people of Sweden, thank you. This is a wonderful visit, and I'm looking forward to it producing concrete results that will enhance the lives of both the American people and the people of Sweden.

So with that, I think we'll take some questions.

Moderator. Yes. We'll now open the floor for questions. The first question goes to Swedish News Agency—[*inaudible*].

Q. Mr. President, welcome to Sweden.

President Obama. Thank you.

National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program/President Obama's View of Swedish Society and Politics

Q. As you might know, the NSA surveillance affair has stirred up quite a few angry reactions, even here in Sweden. What do you want to say to those upset, and how do you think the affair affects the relationship between our countries? And as a follow-up to that, I know that in home—at home you are sometimes accused of wanting to turn the U.S. into Sweden. [*Laughter*] Now that you're here—you've been here for several hours—what have you seen? What actually inspires you? What do you want to import to the U.S. in terms of ideas for society?

President Obama. Well, let me take the NSA question first because this is a question that I've received in previous visits to Europe since the stories broke in the Guardian and I suspect I'll continue to get as I travel through Europe and around the world for quite some time.

Like other countries, we have an intelligence operation that tries to improve our understanding of what's happening around the

world. And in light of 9/11, a lot of energy was focused on improving our intelligence when it came to combating terrorism.

And what I can say with confidence is that when it comes to our domestic operations, the concerns that people have back home in the United States of America—that we do not surveil the American people or persons within the United States, that there are a lot of checks and balances in place designed to avoid a surveillance state—there have been times where the procedures, because these are human endeavors, have not worked the way they should and we had to tighten them up. And I think there are legitimate questions that have been raised about the fact that as technology advances and capabilities grow, it may be that the laws that are currently in place are not sufficient to guard against the dangers of us being able to track so much.

Now, when it comes to intelligence gathering internationally, our focus is on counterterrorism, weapons of mass destruction, cybersecurity: core national security interests of the United States. But what is true is, is that the United States has enormous capabilities when it comes to intelligence. One way to think about it is, in the same way that our military capabilities are significantly greater than many other countries, the same is true for our intelligence capabilities. So even though we may have the same goals, our means are significantly greater.

And I can give assurances to the publics in Europe and around the world that we're not going around snooping at people's e-mails or listening to their phone calls. What we try to do is to target very specifically areas of concern.

Having said that, what I've said domestically and what I say to international audiences is, with changes in technology, with the growth of our capabilities, if our attitude is, because we can do it, we should go ahead and do it, then we may not be addressing some of the legitimate concerns and dangers that exist any time we're talking about intelligence gathering and surveillance.

So what I've asked my national security team to do—as well as independent persons

who are well-known lawyers or civil libertarians or privacy experts to do—is to review everything that we’re doing with the instructions to them that we have to balance the ends with the means. And just because we can do something, doesn’t mean we should do it. And there may be situations in which we’re gathering information just because we can that doesn’t help us with our national security, but does raise questions in terms of whether we’re tipping over into being too intrusive with respect to the interactions of other governments.

And that is something that we are currently reviewing carefully. We are consulting with the EU in this process. We are consulting with other countries in this process and finding out from them what are their areas of specific concern and trying to align what we do in a way that, I think, alleviates some of the public concerns that people may have.

But this is always going to be some—there’s going to be some balancing that takes place on these issues. Some of the folks who have been most greatly offended publicly, we know, privately engage in the same activities directed at us or use information that we’ve obtained to protect their people. And we recognize that. But I think all of us have to take a very thoughtful approach to this problem. And I’m the first one to acknowledge that given advances in technology and the fact that so much of our information flow today is through the Internet, through wireless, that the risks of abuse are greater than they have been in the past.

Now, with respect to Sweden, I haven’t had a chance to wander around Stockholm as much as I would like. It is a gorgeous country. What I know about Sweden, I think, offers us some good lessons. Number one, the work you’ve done on energy, I think, is something that the United States can and will learn from, because every country in the world right now has to recognize that if we’re going to continue to grow, improve our standard of living while maintaining a sustainable planet, then we’re going to have to change our patterns of energy use. And Sweden, I think, is far ahead of many other countries.

Sweden also has been able to have a robust market economy while recognizing that there are some investments in education or infrastructure or research that are important and there’s no contradiction between making public investments and being a firm believer in free markets. And that’s a debate and a discussion that we often have in the United States.

I have to say that if I were here in Europe, I’d probably be considered right in the middle, maybe center-left, maybe center-right, depending on the country. In the United States, sometimes, the names I’m called are quite different. [*Laughter*]

And I think a third observation and final observation I’d make is, though, I know that—I’m sure Fredrik doesn’t feel this as he’s engaging in difficult debates here—I do get a sense that the politics in Sweden right now involve both the ruling party and the opposition engaged in a respectful and rational debate that’s based on facts and issues. And I think that kind of recognition that people can have political differences, but we’re all trying to achieve the same goals, that’s something that Swedes should be proud of and should try to maintain.

White House Press Secretary James F. “Jay” Carney. The first question from the American press goes to Steve Holland of Reuters.

Syria/Chemical Weapons/Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, sir. Have you made up your mind whether to take action against Syria whether or not you have a congressional resolution approved? Is a strike needed in order to preserve your credibility for when you set these sort of red lines? And were you able to enlist the support of the Prime Minister here for support in Syria?

President Obama. Let me unpack the question. First of all, I didn’t set a red line, the world set a red line. The world set a red line when governments representing 98 percent of the world’s population said the use of chemical weapons are abhorrent and passed a treaty forbidding their use even when countries are engaged in war.

Congress set a red line when it ratified that treaty. Congress set a red line when it indicated that—in a piece of legislation titled the Syria Accountability Act—that some of the horrendous things that are happening on the ground there need to be answered for.

And so when I said in a press conference that my calculus about what's happening in Syria would be altered by the use of the chemical weapons, which the overwhelming consensus of humanity says is wrong, that wasn't something I just, kind of, made up. I didn't pluck it out of thin air. There's a reason for it. So that's point number one.

Point number two: My credibility is not on the line, the international community's credibility is on the line. And America and Congress's credibility is on the line because we give lip service to the notion that these international norms are important.

And when those videos first broke and you saw images of over 400 children subjected to gas, everybody expressed outrage: How can this happen in this modern world? Well, it happened because a government chose to deploy these deadly weapons on civilian populations. And so the question is, how credible is the international community when it says this is an international norm that has to be observed? The question is, how credible is Congress when it passes a treaty saying we have to forbid the use of chemical weapons?

And I do think that we have to act, because if we don't, we are effectively saying that even though we may condemn it and issue resolutions and so forth and so on, somebody who is not shamed by resolutions can continue to act with impunity. And those international norms begin to erode. And other despots and authoritarian regimes can start looking and saying, that's something we can get away with. And that then calls into question other international norms and laws of war and whether those are going to be enforced.

So, as I told the Prime Minister, I am very respectful of the U.N. investigators who went in at great danger to try to gather evidence about what happened. We want more information, not less. But when I said that I have high

confidence that chemical weapons were used and that the Asad Government—through their chain of command—ordered their use, that was based on both public sourcing, intercepts, evidence that we feel very confident about, including samples that have been tested showing sarin from individuals who were there.

And I'm very mindful of the fact that around the world—and here in Europe in particular—there are still memories of Iraq and weapons of mass destruction accusations and people being concerned about how accurate this information is. Keep in mind, I'm somebody who opposed the war in Iraq, and I am not interested in repeating mistakes of us basing decisions on faulty intelligence.

But having done a thoroughgoing evaluation of the information that is currently available, I can say with high confidence chemical weapons were used. And by the way, Iran doesn't deny it. Even Syria doesn't actually deny that they were used. And that is what the U.N. investigators are supposed to be determining. And frankly, nobody is really disputing that chemical weapons were used. The only remaining dispute is who used them, which is outside the parameters of the U.N. investigation. So the U.N. investigation will not be able to answer that preliminarily; they're not supposed to.

But what we know is, is that the opposition doesn't have the capability to deliver weapons on this scale. These weapons are in Asad's possession. We have intercepts indicating people in the chain of command, both before and after the attacks, with knowledge of these attacks. We can show that the rockets that delivered these chemical weapons went from areas controlled by Asad into these areas where the opposition was lodged. And the accumulation of evidence gives us high confidence that Asad carried this out.

And so the question is, after we've gone through all this, are we going to try to find a reason not to act? And if that's the case, then I think the world community should admit it. Because you can always find a reason not to act. This is a complicated, difficult situation. And an initial response will not solve the un-

derlying tragedy of the civil war in Syria. As Fredrik mentioned, that will be solved through, eventually, a political transition.

But we can send a very clear, strong message against the prohibition—or in favor of the prohibition against using chemical weapons. We can change Asad's calculus about using them again. We can degrade his capabilities so that he does not use them again. And so what I'm talking about is an action that is limited in time and in scope, targeted at the specific task of degrading his capabilities and deterring the use of those weapons again.

And in the meantime, we will continue to engage the entire international community in trying to find a solution to the underlying problems, which brings me to the last question. And that is, what happens if Congress doesn't approve it? I believe that Congress will approve it. I believe Congress will approve it because I think America recognizes that, as difficult as it is to take any military action—even one as limited as we're talking about, even one without boots on the ground—that's a sober decision.

But I think America also recognizes that if the international community fails to maintain certain norms, standards, laws governing how countries interact and how people are treated, that over time, this world becomes less safe. It becomes more dangerous not only for those people who are subjected to these horrible crimes, but to all of humanity. And we've seen that happen again and again in our history. And the people of Europe are certainly familiar with what happens when the international community finds excuses not to act.

And I would not have taken this before Congress just as a symbolic gesture. I think it's very important that Congress say that we mean what we say. And I think we will be stronger as a country in our response if the President and Congress does it together.

As Commander in Chief, I always preserve the right and the responsibility to act on behalf of America's national security. I do not believe that I was required to take this to Congress. But I did not take this to Congress just because

it's an empty exercise; I think it's important to have Congress's support on it. Okay?

Nobel Peace Prize/Syria

Moderator. And the next Swedish question goes to Swedish National Television—[inaudible].

Q. Mr. President, you've given very eloquent talks about the moral force of nonviolence. I was wondering, could you describe the dilemma to be a Nobel Peace Prize winner and getting ready to attack Syria? And also, in what way did the talk that you had today with Prime Minister Reinfeldt move the world a step closer to resolving the climate crisis?

President Obama. I would refer you to the speech that I gave when I received the Nobel Prize. And I think I started the speech by saying that, compared to previous recipients, I was certainly unworthy. But what I also described was the challenge that all of us face when we believe in peace, but we confront a world that is full of violence and occasional evil. And the question then becomes, what are our responsibilities?

So I've made every effort to end the war in Iraq, to wind down the war in Afghanistan, to strengthen our commitment to multilateral action, to promote diplomacy as the solution to problems. The question, though, that all of us face—not just me, our citizens face, not just political leaders—is at what point do we say we need to confront actions that are violating our common humanity?

And I would argue that when I see 400 children subjected to gas, over 1,400 innocent civilians dying senselessly in an environment in which you already have tens of thousands dying, and we have the opportunity to take some action that is meaningful, even if it doesn't solve the entire problem, may at least mitigate this particular problem, then the moral thing to do is not to stand by and do nothing.

But it's difficult. This is the part of my job that I find most challenging every single day. I would much rather spend my time talking about how to make sure every 3- and 4-year-old gets a good education than I would spending time thinking about how can I prevent 3- and 4-year-olds from

being subjected to chemical weapons and nerve gas.

Unfortunately, that's sometimes the decisions that I'm confronted with as President of the United States. And frankly, as President of the United States, I can't avoid those questions because, as much as we are criticized, when bad stuff happens around the world, the first question is, what is the United States going to do about it? That's true on every issue. It's true in Libya. It's true in Rwanda. It's true in Sierra Leone. It's now true in Syria. That's part of the deal.

What was the second question?

Climate Change

Prime Minister Reinholdt. Climate change.

Q. Climate change.

President Obama. I think we have great opportunities. I think this is a good chance for Fredrik to talk about our shared views here, because we have, I think, a joint belief that developed countries have to make progress, but we have to have an international framework to address where the increases in emissions are now occurring.

Prime Minister Reinholdt. Okay, well, I totally agree to that. I think it's been a very interesting developing—development after Copenhagen. I learned to—we were both present in Copenhagen, but we were saying that U.S. had the highest emissions in the world and that China was catching up. Now, only a few years later, we have a situation where China is now doubled the emissions of the ones we have in U.S. This is actually reshaping the situation when it comes to climate protection.

We are both responsible for lowering our emissions, and we are doing so. But what we have—we must also face the fact that we very soon have a situation where 25 percent of the global emissions is from European Union and United States together. So the world can't say, "solve it," pointing at a quarter. They need to take in the 75 percent outside of European Union and United States. That is our problem. We want to deal with this, but it has to be a global answer.

Press Secretary Carney. Final question goes to Margaret Talev of Bloomberg News.

Russia-U.S. Relations/Syria/Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, tomorrow you'll see President Putin at the G-20. With Russia and U.S. relations seriously strained, do you see value in trying to persuade him still to drop opposition to a Syrian strike, or are you—are your efforts now in that excluding Russia from the decision? And looking back at your hopes for a reset, do you believe that you overestimated what you could change? Or do you believe that Mr. Putin changed the rules midway? If you will indulge me, I have one more, but it's all related.

President Obama. I will indulge you—

Q. Thank you.

President Obama. —to let you answer—ask the question. I may not answer it, but go ahead.

Q. Could you take us behind the scenes on that 45-minute walk around the South Lawn where you changed your mind and decided to take this before Congress?

And, Mr. Prime Minister—

President Obama. Oh, goodness! Margaret, you're really pressing things now. [Laughter] So this is question number four now.

Q. No, this is for the Prime Minister.

President Obama. Okay.

Q. You have expressed some doubts about military action in Syria, and I'm wondering if you could be a little bit more specific about what you're concerned the consequences may be and whether you believe that President Putin has any—shares any burden of the responsibility for Mr. Assad's actions. Thank you.

President Obama. Okay. I mean, I'm just going to try to remember all this. [Laughter]

First of all, the reset in the Russian relationship was not done on a whim. There were specific U.S. interests that I believed we could pursue with Russia, where interests overlapped, that would help us both on our long-term national security and our economy. And we succeeded. We succeeded in passing a New

START Treaty that reduced nuclear stockpiles for both the United States and Russia. Russia joined the WTO, which bound them to a set of international rules governing trade, which, I think, ultimately will be good for the Russian economy, but is also good for its trading partners and potential companies that are investing in Russia, and that includes U.S. companies.

We work together on counterterrorism issues. They have provided us significant assistance in supplying our troops in Afghanistan. There were a whole host of outcomes from that reset that were valuable to the United States.

Now, there's no doubt that, as I indicated a while back, we've kind of hit a wall in terms of additional progress. But I have not written off the idea that the United States and Russia are going to continue to have common interests even as we have some very profound differences on some other issues. And where our interests overlap, we should pursue common action. Where we've got differences, we should be candid about them, try to manage those differences but not sugarcoat them.

One area where we've got a significant difference right now is the situation in Syria. Russia has a longstanding relationship with the Asad regime, and as a consequence, it has been very difficult to get Russia—working through the Security Council—to acknowledge some of the terrible behavior of the Asad regime and to try to push towards the kind of political transition that's needed in order to stabilize Syria.

And I've said to Mr. Putin directly, and I continue to believe that even if you have great concerns about elements in the opposition—and we've got some concerns about certain elements of the opposition like al-Nusra—and even if you're concerned about the territorial integrity of Syria—and we're concerned about the territorial integrity of Syria—if you, in fact, want to end the violence and slaughter inside of Syria, then you're going to have to have a political transition. Because it is not possible for Mr. Asad to regain legitimacy in a country where he's killed tens of thousands of his own people. That will not happen. So far, at least, Mr. Putin has rejected that logic.

As far as security action—Security Council action, we have gone repeatedly to the Security Council for even the most modest of resolutions condemning some of the actions that have taken place there, and it has been resisted by Russia.

And do I hold out hope that Mr. Putin may change his position on some of these issues? I'm always hopeful. And I will continue to engage him because I think that international action would be much more effective and, ultimately, we can end deaths much more rapidly if Russia takes a different approach to these problems.

In terms of my decision to take the issue to Congress, this had been brewing in my mind for a while. Some people have noted—and I think this is true—that had I been in the Senate in the midst of this period, I probably would have suggested to a Democratic or a Republican President that Congress should have the ability to weigh in on an issue like this that is not immediate, imminent, time sensitive. When the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Mr. Dempsey, indicated to me that whether we struck today, tomorrow, or a month from now, we could still do so effectively, then I think that raised the question of, why not ask Congress to debate this in a serious way?

Because I do think it raises issues that are going to occur for us and for the international community for many years to come. I mean, the truth of the matter is, is that under international law, Security Council resolution or self-defense or defense of an ally provides a clear basis for action. But increasingly, what we're going to be confronted with are situations like Syria, like Kosovo, like Rwanda, in which we may not always have a Security Council that can act—it may be paralyzed for a whole host of reasons—and yet we've got all these international norms that we're interested in upholding. We may not be directly, imminently threatened by what's taking place in a Kosovo or a Syria or a Rwanda in the short term, but our long-term national security will be impacted in a profound way, and our humanity is impacted in a profound way.

And so I think it's important for us to get out of the habit in those circumstances—again, I'm not talking about circumstances where our national security is directly impacted, we've been attacked, et cetera, where the President has to act quickly—but in circumstances of the type that I describe, it's important for us to get out of the habit of just saying, well, we'll let the President kind of stretch the boundaries of his authority as far as he can; Congress will sit on the sidelines, snipe. If it works, the sniping will be a little less; if it doesn't, a little more. But either way, the American people and their representatives are not fully invested in what are tough choices.

And we as a country and the world are going to start—have to take tough choices. I do get frustrated, although I'm under—I understand how complex this is, and any time you're involving military action, then people will ask, well, this may do more harm than good. I understand those arguments; I wrestle with them every day. But I do have to ask people, well, if, in fact, you're outraged by the slaughter of innocent people, what are you doing about it?

And if the answer is, "Well, we should engage diplomatically," well, we've engaged diplomatically. The answer is, "Well, we should shine the spotlight and shame these governments," well, these governments oftentimes show no shame. "Well, we should act internationally." Well, sometimes, because of the various alignments, it's hard to act through a Security Council resolution.

And so either we resign ourselves to saying there's nothing we can do about it, and we'll just shake our heads and go about our business, or we make decisions even when they're difficult. And I think this is an example of where we need to take—make decisions even though they're difficult. And I think it's important for Congress to be involved in that decision.

Prime Minister Reinfeldt. I think I should answer the question. I think you're right in saying that this is a very difficult decision to take and, as always, it's a balancing act. And we've been discussing this during our talks.

Just to remind you, you're now in Sweden, a small country with a deep belief in the United

Nations. You're also in a country where, I think yesterday or the day before, we took the decision that all the people that are now coming from the war in Syria are allowed to stay permanently in Sweden. So a lot of the people following this press conference here in Sweden are actually just now coming from Syria and, of course, wondering what is the view of their country. And they have a lot of their countrymen also in this country, so we have a lot of roots and links to Syria.

I think the main problem has been for 2½ years now that we have a war without a clear political solution. And that, at the end of the day, must be—we must get a cease-fire. We must get a peace process. We must get people to talk to each other.

I totally understand the complex situation also on the opposition, because we have part of the opposition also here in Sweden, which is now conducted of different groups. They want to get Asad out of the picture, but what do they want instead? That is, of course, a question we need to attend to.

The weapons inspector that was present in Damascus is headed by a Swede. So in this country, of course, we are asking for the time to be able to see what were their findings, especially since President Obama has sent the decision also to Congress. We think that that gives us some more time, and we are welcoming that.

Having said that, I also said I understand the absolute problem of not having a reaction to use of chemical weapons and what kind of signal that sends to the world in a time where we are developing our view on international law, not saying that you're allowed to do whatever you like to your own people as long as it's inside your own borders, no. We have these—we need to protect people. We need to look at the interest of each and every one. So this is the development we are seeing. That's the same discussion we are having in Sweden.

So I need—I understand, especially the U.S. President needs to react; otherwise he will get another kind of discussion. But this small country will always say, let's put our hope into the United Nations. Let us push on some more to get a better situation.

Of course, President Putin has a responsibility in that. Of course. Because everyone understands that Russia and also China has been outside of the decisionmaking that we would have needed a long time ago to put more clear pressure and more political solution.

So that is what we have been discussing today. If you balance all these sentences, that shows how difficult this is.

President Obama. Okay. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:45 p.m. at the Rosenbad building. In his remarks, Prime Minister Reinfeldt referred to Ake Sellström, chief scientist of the United Nations chemical weapons inspection team sent to Syria on behalf of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister John Fredrik Reinfeldt of Sweden *September 4, 2013*

Sweden and the United States are very special friends. Today we reaffirmed the dedication of the Kingdom of Sweden and the United States of America to enhance our cooperation across the full range of shared economic, environmental, and security challenges. We agreed that our close cooperation, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora, is derived from shared values such as democracy, the respect for human rights, and the rule of law.

This is a special year in the relationship between Sweden and the United States, as it marks 375 years since the establishment of the first Swedish settlement "New Sweden" in the United States and 230 years since the first free trade agreement between our countries was signed. Today over four million Americans claim Swedish heritage. Business ties flourish between our countries. And our work together around the world magnifies the positive impact we can have when facing common challenges in pursuit of our shared agenda.

We confirmed our determination to continue to promote growth and jobs, counter climate change and accelerate the transition to a sustainable energy future, expand trade and investment, work for international peace and security, and promote global development, conflict prevention, and disarmament. President Obama expressed his appreciation to the Prime Minister for arranging the dinner with regional leaders, allowing for consultations

with Nordic colleagues on a number of shared challenges.

We looked forward to the opportunity to commemorate Raoul Wallenberg this afternoon and pay tribute to a man who chose not to be indifferent and to rise to a higher moral calling. We remember and revere Raoul Wallenberg and his courageous deeds saving thousands of Hungarian Jews from the Holocaust.

We noted that climate change and its consequences are defining challenges of our time. The United States and Sweden are determined to take actions to counter climate change and promote clean energy, domestically and internationally, including through the UN climate negotiations, while driving continued economic growth.

Today we reinforced our support for the efforts of the Swedish-American Green Alliance (SAGA) to further enhance our cooperation to enable the transition to a sustainable energy future. The priorities of SAGA are developing smart grids to ensure efficient transmission of electricity, developing renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency, developing sustainable cities, and cooperation to facilitate innovation and commercialization of sustainable energy technologies. As founding members of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, Sweden and the United States are pleased that the Coalition, as a complement to the work on long-lived climate pollutants, is already working to catalyze significant global

reductions of short-lived climate pollutants. We agreed to redouble our efforts and invite others to join to take full advantage of the Coalition's potential, including through innovative approaches to financing methane abatement.

Sweden and the United States share a commitment to promoting growth and jobs through actions to strengthen global demand. Fiscal strategies should be adapted to economic conditions and to available fiscal space. We share a commitment to advancing financial reform to build a more resilient global financial system.

We discussed the significance of the launch of the negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP). T-TIP aims to boost economic growth in the United States and in the EU and add to the more than 13 million American and EU jobs already supported by transatlantic trade and investment. We also reaffirmed our support for the multilateral trading system through our efforts within the WTO to liberalize trade in services and environmental goods and to strengthen trade facilitation. This will not only bring new jobs and growth to both continents, but also even further strengthen the political and economic partnership. Global economic recovery, growth, and combating poverty are shared goals. To achieve these goals, Sweden and the United States agree on the importance of further trade liberalisation and opening of markets.

Sweden and the United States stress the importance of the work of the Arctic Council. We look forward to increasing our cooperation to protect and conduct research on the Arctic environment, improving living conditions, and encouraging sustainable development in the Arctic, particularly with respect to indigenous communities.

We reiterated our determination to continue working together to promote peace and security around the world. Our cooperation within the United Nations on peacekeeping, as well as partnership in NATO-led missions such as ISAF and KFOR, contribute to a more peaceful, secure world. We are committed to developing the relationship between NATO and

Partner countries further. Sweden and the United States are leaders in advancing the critical role of women in achieving international peace and security. Sweden has generously offered the Nordic Center for Gender in Military Operations for NATO use, and the United States has committed to provide support for the center's training and education efforts.

We reaffirmed our commitment to seeking a world without nuclear weapons, supporting ongoing efforts on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We welcome the achievements made through the Nuclear Security Summits to secure nuclear material and reduce the threat of nuclear terrorism.

We agreed that development and humanitarian aid are strategic, economic, and moral imperatives. We are committed to aggressive efforts to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals before 2015. Achieving real results in people's lives constitutes our greatest chance to make a difference. We will reinforce our efforts to improve child and maternal health. We recognize that the eradication of extreme poverty is the core of our future global development. We envision a common post-2015 agenda that sets clear, ambitious, and measurable goals to meet the social, economic, and environmental needs of the eight billion people who will inhabit the planet by 2030.

We affirmed our joint commitment to protect the human rights of LGBT persons globally through support to the Global Equality Fund. Launched in 2011, the Fund assists civil society organizations in over 25 countries worldwide. The United States and Sweden are each preparing a \$6 million contribution of new resources to support the Fund over three years, totaling a \$12 million commitment.

We emphasized our support for the EU's Eastern Partnership as a means to help address economic challenges in the region, promote the EU integration of the Eastern European partner countries, and develop democracy, respect for human rights, and rule of law.

We recognized the importance of regional cooperation, including with the Baltic states.

Sweden and the United States are continuing our collaboration on other common foreign policy areas. Today we have, among other things, discussed the situations in Syria and Egypt. We are determined to work together to promote respect for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Egypt. With regard to the situation in Syria, we strongly condemn any and all use of chemical weapons. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

We share the goal of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, resulting in two independent and democratic states living side by side in peace and security. Sweden and the United States welcome and support the decision by Israel and the Palestinians to resume final status negotiations, and encourage the parties to continue engaging in good faith negotiations towards this shared goal.

We remain gravely concerned about Iran's nuclear program and urge Iran to comply with all its international obligations, including full implementation by Iran of UN Security Council

and International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors resolutions. We reaffirm our commitment to work toward a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue in accordance with the dual track approach.

We urge North Korea to deescalate tensions on the Korean peninsula, commit to irreversible steps leading to denuclearization, and comply with all relevant UN Security Council resolutions and other international agreements. President Obama expressed his gratitude to the Kingdom of Sweden for serving as the United States' protecting power in North Korea.

This historic first bilateral visit of an American president to Sweden underscores not only the importance of the U.S.-Sweden relationship, but also the bonds between the United States and all the Nordic countries and the globally significant relationship between America and Europe.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at the Great Synagogue in Stockholm, Sweden *September 4, 2013*

Good afternoon. I want to thank Prime Minister Reinfeldt, Lena Posner-Körösi, and Rabbi Narowe for welcoming me here to the Great Synagogue, the heart of the Jewish community here in Stockholm.

This evening is the first night of the Jewish High Holidays, Rosh Hashanah. For our Jewish friends, it's a time of joy and celebration, to give thanks for our blessings, and to look ahead to the coming year. So to all our Jewish friends here in Sweden, in the United States, and around the world, especially in Israel, I want to wish you and your families a sweet and happy New Year. *Shana Tova*.

Days such as this are a time of reflection, an occasion to consider not just our relationship with God, but our relationship with each other as human beings. We're reminded of our basic obligations: to recognize ourselves in each other, to treat one another with compassion, to reach out to the less fortunate among us, to do

our part to help repair our world. These values are at the heart of the great partnership between Sweden and the United States. And these values defined the life of the man we remember today: Raoul Wallenberg.

Now, last year we marked the 100th anniversary of Wallenberg's birth, and I was proud to send my greetings to your ceremony here in Stockholm. Today we're honored to be joined by those who loved him and whose lives he touched: members of the Wallenberg family, including his half-sister Nina and the family of his late half-brother Guy; Wallenberg's colleague, Gabriella Kassius; and some of the countless men and women whom Wallenberg saved from the Holocaust.

We just had a wonderful visit together. They showed me some incredible artifacts, some of the Swedish passports Wallenberg used to protect Jews in Budapest. I saw his diary, his own passport, including a picture of him as he was

and as he will always remain: young and determined and full of energy and an enormous heart. And I'm here today because, as Americans, we cherish our ties to Wallenberg as well.

He was a son of Sweden, but he also studied in America. I know he spent most of his time in Ann Arbor, but my understanding is, he spent some time in my hometown of Chicago as well. He could have remained in the comfort of Stockholm, but he went to Nazi-occupied Hungary in partnership with the U.S. War Refugee Board. To this day, schools and streets in America bear his name, and he is one of only a few individuals ever granted honorary U.S. citizenship. So he's beloved in both our countries; he's one of the links that bind us together.

Wallenberg's life is a challenge to us all to live those virtues of empathy and compassion, even when it's hard, even when it involves great risk. He came from a prominent family, but he chose to help the most vulnerable. He was a Lutheran, and yet he risked his lives to save Jews. "I will never be able to go back to Stockholm," he said, "without knowing inside myself I'd done all a man could do to save as many Jews as possible."

So when Jews in Budapest were marked with that yellow star, Wallenberg shielded them behind the blue and yellow of the Swedish flag. When they were forced into death marches, he showed up with the food and water that gave them life. When they were loaded on trains for the camps, he climbed on board too and pulled them off. He lived out one of the most important *mitzvots*—most important commandments—in the Jewish tradition: to redeem a captive; to save a life; the belief that when a neighbor is suffering, we cannot stand idly by.

And because he refused to stand by, Wallenberg reminds us of our power when we choose not simply to bear witness, but also to act: the tens of thousands he saved from the camps; the estimated 100,000 Jews of Budapest who survived the war, in no small measure because of this man and those like Gabriella who risked their lives as well. It also calls to mind the compassion of Swedes who helped to rescue so many Jews from Denmark 70 years ago this

year. And this legacy shines bright in the survivors who are here today and in the family trees that have continued to grow ever since, children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren who owe their very existence to a Swedish hero that they never knew.

I cannot think of a better tribute to Raoul Wallenberg than for each of us—as individuals and as nations—to reaffirm our determination to live the values that defined his life and to make the same choice in our time. And so today we say that we will make a habit of empathy. We will stand against anti-Semitism and hatred in all its forms. We will choose to recognize the beauty and dignity and worth of every person and every child. And we will choose to instill in the hearts of our own children the love and tolerance and compassion that we seek.

One of those whom Wallenberg saved later told this story. He was a young boy in hiding when they came for the women, including his mother. And "my mother kissed me," he said, "and I cried and she cried. And we knew we were parting forever." But then, "2 or 3 hours later, to my amazement, my mother returned with the other women, and it seemed like a mirage, a miracle. My mother was there. She was alive and she was hugging me and kissing me, and she said one word: Wallenberg."

Today we stand in awe of the courage of one man who earned his place in the Righteous Among the Nations. And we pray for the day when all peoples and nations find the same strength: to recognize the humanity that we share and to summon in our own lives our capacity for good, to live with tolerance and respect, to treat everyone with dignity, and to provide our children with the peace that they deserve.

So thank you very much. It is a great honor to be here today. And on behalf of the American people, we want to say to the Wallenberg family how truly inspired and grateful we are for all that he did. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:10 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lena Posner-Körösi, president, Official Council of Jewish Communities in Sweden.

Joint Statement by the United States, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden *September 4, 2013*

The Kingdom of Denmark, Republic of Finland, Republic of Iceland, Kingdom of Norway, Kingdom of Sweden, and the United States of America reaffirm our deep partnership based on shared fundamental values including our commitment to democracy, human rights, respect for the rule of law, and economic freedom. We continue to deepen our collaboration on important shared global priorities, including climate change and clean energy, the Arctic, a strong, open multilateral trading system, emerging security challenges, global development and humanitarian assistance, and Europe's regional economic and security environment. This evening, we have come together at a defining moment in the transatlantic relationship to discuss our long-term goals in each of these areas and agree to take concrete steps to achieve those goals.

United on Global Issues

The United States and the Nordic countries share the goal of a stable and peaceful Middle East. We agree that all relevant parties must work urgently for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We are determined to work together to promote respect for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Egypt. With regard to the situation in Syria, we strongly condemn any and all use of chemical weapons, and we are convinced a strong international reaction is required. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

We recognize the importance of cooperation between our countries in building comprehensive security and addressing security issues in the 21st century, including terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illicit international arms trade, and threats to cyber security. We also recognize that we must address these challenges in a manner that respects our most cherished values and protects universal human rights and fundamental

freedoms, which are at the foundation of all flourishing democracies. We note the need to continue to strengthen our countries' important contributions to regional, transatlantic, and international forums, including in the EU, NATO, and NATO Partnership context. We recommit to continuing and expanding our security, recognizing that this cooperation—with and among the Nordic countries, with other regional partners, including especially the Baltic states, and in transatlantic and international fora—will be crucial to our success.

To complement our already robust bilateral and regional security cooperation, we agree to launch a U.S.-Nordic Security Dialogue, which will meet annually to discuss opportunities for collaboration on global and regional security issues, focusing primarily on issues arising in the United Nations, including an integrated approach to preventive diplomacy, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and atrocity prevention. Another stream of work will include joint capacity building efforts to promote stabilization in fragile and conflict affected states—linking up security and development efforts, and civilian and military partners.

Recognizing that we still have work to do closer to home, we agree on our mutual commitment to deepening regional cooperation and continuing to pursue our common vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.

We underscore the importance of actions that can support a global economic recovery, including the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) currently being negotiated between the European Union and the United States. T-TIP aims to boost economic growth in the United States and the EU and add to the more than 13 million American and EU jobs already supported by transatlantic trade and investment. We also look forward to exploring ways we can bolster trade and investment between the United States and Norway and Iceland. We also emphasize our commitment to achieving significant and substantive

outcomes at the 9th World Trade Organization Ministerial.

We agree that the fight against tax avoidance and evasion should be a top priority in all relevant international fora. We support the work of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's on base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) and automatic exchange of information as the new global standard. The engagement of the G-20 in these issues is important. The misuse of shell companies can be a severe impediment to sustainable economic growth and sound governance. We will make a concerted and collective effort to tackle this issue and improve the transparency of companies and legal arrangements.

Partnering on Climate Change and the Arctic

Climate change is one of the foremost challenges for our future economic growth and well-being. We underscore the importance of continuing to encourage innovative approaches to promoting energy efficiency and clean energy, including renewables, and of taking action on climate change, domestically and internationally. This requires mobilizing scaled up climate finance. We agreed on the importance of reaching an ambitious, comprehensive, fair, and inclusive climate agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2015 that is consistent with science, mindful of the two degree target, and applicable to all.

As part of our commitment to accelerating the transition to low-carbon energy systems worldwide, the leaders of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden will join the United States in ending public financing for new coal-fired power plants overseas, except in rare circumstances. We will work together to secure the support of other countries and multilateral development banks to adopt similar policies. The Nordic countries and the United States agreed to continue their work, in all appropriate channels, to reduce the use of domestic fossil fuel subsidies globally. The United States also agrees to join with the Nordic members of the Friends of Fossil Fuel Subsidy

Reform to undertake peer reviews of domestic fossil fuel subsidies.

Recognizing the rapid growth of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition over its first 18 months, we note the potential of the Coalition to catalyze significant global reductions of short-lived climate pollutants, which have major impacts on climate change and public health. The U.S. and Nordic members of the Coalition agree to intensify our efforts and invite others to join to take full advantage of the Coalition's potential.

The United States and Nordic members of the Clean Energy Ministerial continue to support various ministerial initiatives, including the 21st Century Power Partnership, which brings together government and private sector actors to help identify and promote successful technical, policy, and financial pathways to cleaner and more efficient power systems in both developed and developing countries. Additionally, the United States and Nordic countries expressed our support for the "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative of the UN Secretary-General.

We recommit to protecting the Arctic environment, working to improve living conditions and encouraging sustainable development in the Arctic region, particularly with respect to indigenous peoples, and ensuring that the Arctic remains a peaceful region of cooperation. We will pursue opportunities in future Arctic Council meetings and other international fora to promote prosperity, foster scientific cooperation, and reduce emissions of black carbon in the Arctic region, as agreed upon in the Kiruna Declaration.

Advancing Global Development

As leaders in providing development assistance, we agree on the strategic, economic, and moral imperative of global development and humanitarian aid. We are committed to aggressive efforts to accelerate achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs continue to be a symbol of our common humanity and a statement of the world's commitment to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, combating disease,

achieving gender equality, free quality education for all, and environmental sustainability, thus extending hope and opportunity to billions across the world. We note the opportunities for using trade to boost economic growth and reduce poverty in developing countries, as well as the importance of promoting human rights and gender equality. In addition, we agree that vaccination through GAVI represents one of the most cost-effective approaches to save children's lives and that with enhanced efforts, polio can be eradicated within this decade. Together, we envision a unified post-2015 agenda that addresses poverty, inclusive growth, and sustainability in clear, ambitious, and measurable goals.

The United States and Nordic countries are critical donors in fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria worldwide. We commend the reforms and results achieved by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria and will work together to ensure a successful replenishment. In a demonstration of strong leadership, a number of Nordic countries are together pledging \$750 million, with over \$150 million in increased funds, for the Global Fund replenishment, subject to parliamentary approval. This funding will leverage \$375 million from the U.S. challenge pledge of \$1 for every \$2 donated. These historic multilateral investments will work to turn the tide against these three devastating diseases.

Access to electricity continues to be one of the most significant hurdles to economic growth and development. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, more than two-thirds of the population is without access to power. To support a doubling of electricity access in sub-Saharan Africa the United States and Nordic countries have expressed our support for the Power Africa initiative and agree to work together to provide technical assistance, financing, and other support to enable additional investment in energy projects throughout the region.

In support of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), we agree to promote transparency and accountability of expenditures and revenues related to the extraction of natural resources, including through

support to the multi-donor trust fund for EITI or the EITI Secretariat. EU member states Denmark, Finland, and Sweden intend to quickly transpose the EU Accounting and Transparency Directive, which requires mandatory disclosures of payments made to governments for extractive and logging projects.

Protecting Human Rights and Strengthening Governance

We will work together to eradicate poverty, promote good governance and human rights, combat all forms of trafficking in persons, and strengthen gender equality and the rights of women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

We agree to make real our respective obligations and commitments to promote and protect women's human rights and fundamental freedoms as outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, the United Nations resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, and other international instruments and agreements on women's rights. We note in particular the importance of empowering women as equal partners in preventing conflict and building peace and ensuring their protection from violence, and of our continued bilateral and multilateral engagement to this end in such countries as Afghanistan and Pakistan and in the Middle East. In Afghanistan, for example, we endorse such flagship initiatives as PROMOTE, UN Women's Elimination of Violence against Women Special Fund, the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund's EQUIP, and the National Solidarity Program's Community Development Councils, which together empower a critical mass of Afghan women to fully participate in Afghan society.

We strengthen our commitments to advance equality and dignity for LGBT persons through the Global Equality Fund. This commitment reflects an increasingly growing global sentiment that all persons should be treated equally and with dignity regardless of who they are or who they love.

The United States and Nordic members of the Open Government Partnership, a multilateral initiative that asks governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and strengthen governance, agree to redouble our efforts to develop ambitious “Race to the Top” commitments for the October 31 Open Government Partnership Ministerial.

Working together, we have a historic opportunity to make progress on issues of global significance, and we remain steadfast in our dedication to the pursuit of these goals.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan in St. Petersburg, Russia September 5, 2013

Prime Minister Abe. It is my great pleasure to have a bilateral meeting on the occasion of G-20 today. Also, it was extremely meaningful for both of us to have a telephone conversation to discuss the situation in Syria. I certainly look forward to continuously and closely working with you to improve the situation on the ground.

And also, since my last visit to the United States back in February, I have made firm decisions on major issues in our bilateral contacts, including TPP issue.

We had a major victory in the upper house election back in July. Therefore, we now have the stable foundation as an administration, and I certainly look forward to addressing economic issues such as achieving economic growth and also addressing security issues.

And also, with regard to our joint endeavor to address these challenges, I would like to talk about mid- to long-term perspective and also direction of our collaboration.

President Obama. Well, it is wonderful to see Prime Minister Abe and his delegation again. As I've said before, the U.S.-Japan alliance is one of the cornerstones not just of Japan's and America's security, but also a cornerstone for peace and security around the world.

Here at the G-20, our primary purpose is to focus on the economy and how we can improve the world's prospects for jobs and growth and

stability. And I know that Prime Minister Abe has taken some very bold steps to boost growth and jobs and demand in Japan.

But I know that Prime Minister Abe is also committed—as we are—to completing, this year, negotiations around the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which promises to open up markets and to create the kinds of high-standards trade agreements throughout the largest and most dynamic and fastest growing set of markets in the world.

During the meeting, we'll also have an opportunity to discuss a range of security issues, including our continued concerns about the nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the importance of North Korea abiding by international law.

And I also look forward to having an extensive conversation about the situation in Syria and, I think, our joint recognition that the use of chemical weapons in Syria is not only a tragedy, but also a violation of international law that must be addressed.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 3:20 p.m. at the bilateral meetings pavilion of the Constantine Palace. Prime Minister Abe spoke in Japanese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Xi Jinping of China in St. Petersburg September 6, 2013

President Xi. Honorable President Obama, it's my great pleasure to meet you again. Our meeting today reminds me of the meeting we had this past June when we met in the Annenberg Estate. In that meeting, we reached important consensus of mutual interest in our bilateral relationship. In particular, we agreed once again to building a new model of major country relationship between China and the United States.

The Annenberg Estate is a beautiful and quiet place, and I still have fresh memories of your warm hospitality. So I take this opportunity to thank you again for hosting me.

Since we met last time, our two teams have worked closely together to implement a consensus we have reached. The fifth round of the China-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogue produced bountiful results. Our mil-to-mil relationship continues to improve. We have made solid progress in advancing practical cooperation in many different areas, and we have maintained close communication and coordination of major international and regional issues.

In my view, the China-U.S. relationship has maintained a sound momentum of development.

President Obama. Well, Mr. President, thank you for hosting us, and it is a pleasure to see you again.

As President Xi indicated, we had excellent meetings in Sunnylands earlier this year. And we've agreed to continue to build a new model of great power relations based on practical co-

operation and constructively managing our differences.

As has been indicated, we've made significant progress on a range of issues, whether it's cooperation on addressing climate change, expanded military-to-military consultations that ensure awareness and avoid potential conflicts or miscommunications. And we've had some extensive discussions through the Strategic and Economic Dialogue about how we can continue to grow the economy and give some momentum to global growth that creates jobs, prosperity, and balanced growth around the world.

So this gives us an additional opportunity to discuss some of the topics at issue here at the G-20, as well as our mutual interest in addressing some significant global challenges, such as the challenge posed by North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.

And although there will continue to be some significant disagreements and sources of tension, I'm confident that they can be managed. And I want to reiterate that the United States welcomes the continuing peaceful rise of China and is interested in a China that is playing a stable and prosperous and responsible role, not only in the Asia-Pacific, but around the world.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 9:50 a.m. at Villa 10 on the Constantine Palace campus. President Xi spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President François Hollande of France in St. Petersburg September 6, 2013

President Obama. It's always a pleasure to sit down with President Hollande. France is one of our oldest and closest allies as a critical voice in global affairs. So we very much appreciate President Hollande's leadership and France's partnership in some of the challenges that our countries in the world face together.

I thanked France and President Hollande for their outstanding efforts in Mali. We congratulate the Malian people on successful Presidential elections, and our countries will continue to work with the international community, including the United Nations, to help Mali to strengthen its democratic institutions and pursue reconciliation.

We had the opportunity to discuss how we and our P-5-plus-1 partners remain prepared to engage diplomatically with Iran to resolve the international community's concerns with Iran's nuclear program. We recognize there have been new elections in Iran. We hope that they take the opportunity to demonstrate—in actions and not just in words—that they, in fact, are committed to not pursuing a nuclear weapon.

With regard to Syria, obviously, a topic that President Hollande and I have had extensive discussions about, both our countries have concluded the same thing: that chemical weapons were used in Syria; that they were used by the Asad regime against civilians; that the chemical weapons ban is a critical international norm; and that it needs to be enforced.

I value very much President Hollande's commitment to a strong international response for these grievous acts. Any action that we contemplate, and partners like France might contemplate, would be limited, proportionate, and appropriate and would be focused on deterring the use of chemical weapons in the future and degrading the Asad regime's capacity to use chemical weapons.

We recognize that there is an underlying civil war that cannot be solved by military means alone, and so we continue to be committed to engaging in the Geneva II process to bring about a transition that could actually bring stability, prosperity, peace, and legitimacy to the situation in Syria.

We discussed our extensive engagement with our European and global counterparts, including here at the G-20. And it's clear that

there are many countries in the world that agree with us that international norms must be upheld, and we're going to continue to consult closely with each other and with other leaders in the days to come.

So I—one last comment: We had a discussion about how the Syrian situation poses significant risks to Lebanon as well as Jordan, and we heard directly from Prime Minister Erdogan, the impact that it's having on Turkey. So even as we are looking at specific actions to enforce the international norm against using chemical weapons, we very much welcome and are participating with other countries in the humanitarian effort to ensure that we do not see a destabilizing situation that gets worse for neighboring countries in the region, as well as to provide just basic relief—food, care—health care, all the basics—for the Syrian population, millions of whom have been displaced by this terrible civil war.

So again, I want to thank very much François for his outstanding leadership and partnership in managing a whole range of very difficult situations around the world, but ones that ultimately, when like-minded countries get together, potentially can have a positive impact on.

[At this point, President Hollande made remarks in French, which were translated by an interpreter, but no transcript was provided.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:53 p.m. at the bilateral meetings pavilion of the Constantine Palace. In his remarks, he referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria.

The President's News Conference in St. Petersburg September 6, 2013

The President. Good evening. Let me begin by thanking President Putin and the people of St. Petersburg and the people of Russia for hosting this G-20. This city has a long and storied history, including its historic resistance and extraordinary sacrifices during the Second World War. So I want to take this opportunity to salute the people of St. Petersburg and ex-

press our gratitude for their outstanding hospitality.

Now, this summit marks another milestone in the world's recovery from the financial crisis that erupted 5 years ago this month. Instead of the looming threat of another financial meltdown, we're focused for the first time in many years on building upon the gains that we've

made. For the first time in 3 years, instead of an urgent discussion to address the European financial crisis, we see a Europe that has emerged from recession.

Moreover, the United States is a source of strength in the global economy. Our manufacturing sector is rebounding. New rules have strengthened our banks and reduced the chance of another crisis. We're reducing our addiction to foreign oil and producing more clean energy. And as we learned today, over the past 3½ years, our businesses have created 7½ million new jobs, a pace of more than 2 million jobs each year. We've put more people back to work, but we've also cleared away the rubble of crisis and laid the foundation for stronger and more durable economic growth.

We're also making progress in putting our fiscal house in order. Our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in 60 years. And as Congress takes up important decisions in the coming month, I'm going to keep making the case for the smart investments and fiscal responsibility that keeps our economy growing, creates jobs, and keeps the U.S. competitive. That includes making sure we don't risk a U.S. default over paying bills we've already racked up. I'm determined that the world has confidence in the full faith and credit of the United States.

Now, as the world's largest economy, our recovery is helping to drive global growth. And in the emerging markets in particular, there's a recognition that a strong U.S. economy is good for their economies too.

Yet we came to St. Petersburg mindful of the challenges that remain. As it emerges from recession, Europe has an opportunity to focus on boosting demand and reducing unemployment, as well as making some of the structural changes that can increase long-term growth. Growth in emerging economies has slowed, so we need to make sure that we are working with them in managing this process. And I'm pleased that over the past 2 days, we reached a consensus on how to proceed.

We agreed that our focus needs to be on creating jobs and growth that put people back to work. We agreed on ways to encourage the investments in infrastructure that keep econo-

mies competitive. Nations agreed to continue pursuing financial reforms and to address tax evasion and tax avoidance, which undermines budgets and unfairly shifts the tax burden to other taxpayers.

We're moving ahead with our development agenda, with a focus on issues like food security and combating corruption. And I'm very pleased that the G-20 nations agreed to make faster progress on phasing down certain greenhouse gases a priority. That's an important step in our fight against climate change.

During my trip, we also continued our efforts to advance two key trade initiatives: the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. And I believe that if we continue to move forward on all the fronts that I've described, we can keep the global economy growing and keep creating jobs for our people.

Of course, even as we've focused on our shared prosperity—and although the primary task of the G-20 is to focus on our joint efforts to boost the global economy—we did also discuss a grave threat to our shared security, and that's the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons. And what I've been emphasizing and will continue to stress is that the Assad regime's brazen use of chemical weapons isn't just a Syrian tragedy; It's a threat to global peace and security.

Syria's escalating use of chemical weapons threatens its neighbors: Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Israel. It threatens to further destabilize the Middle East. It increases the risk that these weapons will fall into the hands of terrorist groups. But more broadly, it threatens to unravel the international norm against chemical weapons embraced by 189 nations, and those nations represent 98 percent of the world's people.

Failing to respond to this breach of this international norm would send a signal to rogue nations, authoritarian regimes, and terrorist organizations that they can develop and use weapons of mass destruction and not pay a consequence. And that's not the world that we want to live in.

This is why nations around the world have condemned Syria for this attack and called for action. I've been encouraged by discussions with my fellow leaders this week; there is a growing recognition that the world cannot stand idly by. Here in St. Petersburg, leaders from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East have come together to say that the international norm against the use of chemical weapons must be upheld and that the Asad regime used these weapons on its own people and that, as a consequence, there needs to be a strong response.

The Arab League Foreign Ministers have said the Asad regime is responsible and called for "deterrent and necessary measures against the culprits of this crime." The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, its General Secretariat has called the attack a "blatant affront to all religious and moral values and a deliberate disregard of international laws and norms, which requires a decisive action."

So, in the coming days, I'll continue to consult with my fellow leaders around the world, and I will continue to consult with Congress. And I will make the best case that I can to the American people, as well as to the international community, for taking necessary and appropriate action. And I intend to address the American people from the White House on Tuesday.

The kind of world we live in and our ability to deter this kind of outrageous behavior is going to depend on the decisions that we make in the days ahead. And I'm confident that if we deliberate carefully and we choose wisely and embrace our responsibilities, we can meet the challenges of this moment as well as those in the days ahead.

So with that, let me take some questions. I've got my handy list. And I will start with Julie Pace from AP.

Syria/President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned the number of countries that have condemned the use of chemical weapons—

The President. Yes.

Q. —but your advisers also say you're leaving this summit with a strong number of countries backing your call for military action. President Putin, just a short time ago, indicated it may only be a handful of countries, including France, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. Can you tell us publicly what countries are backing your call for military action? And did you change any minds here? President Putin also mentioned your meeting with him earlier today. Can you tell us how that came about, and did you discuss both Syria and Edward Snowden? Thank you.

The President. I believe that there will be a statement issued later this evening—although, hopefully, in time for you guys to file back home—that indicates some of the additional countries that are making public statements.

Last night we had a good discussion. And I want to give President Putin credit that he facilitated, I think, a full airing of views on the issue. And here's how I would describe it, without giving the details or betraying the confidence of those who were speaking within the confines of the dinner. It was unanimous that chemical weapons were used—a unanimous conclusion that chemical weapons were used in Syria. There was a unanimous view that the norm against using chemical weapons has to be maintained, that these weapons were banned for a reason, and that the international community has to take those norms seriously.

I would say that the majority of the room is comfortable with our conclusion that Asad—the Asad Government—was responsible for their use. Obviously, this is disputed by President Putin. But if you polled the leaders last night, I am confident that you'd get a majority who said it is most likely—we are pretty confident—that the Asad regime used them.

Where there is a division has to do with the United Nations. There are a number of countries that, just as a matter of principle, believe that if military action is to be taken it needs to go through the U.N. Security Council. There are others—and I put myself in this camp, as somebody who's a strong supporter of the United Nations, who very much appreciates

the courage of the investigators who had gone in and looks forward to seeing the U.N. report, because I think we should try to get more information, not less in this situation—it is my view and a view that was shared by a number of people in the room that given Security Council paralysis on this issue, if we are serious about upholding a ban on chemical weapons use, then an international response is required, and that will not come through Security Council action.

And that's where, I think, the division comes from. And I respect those who are concerned about setting precedents of action outside of a U.N. Security Council resolution. I would greatly prefer working through multilateral channels and through the United Nations to get this done. But ultimately, what I believe in even more deeply, because I think that the security of the world and—my particular task, looking out for the national security of the United States—requires that when there's a breach this brazen of a norm this important, and the international community is paralyzed and frozen and doesn't act, then that norm begins to unravel.

And if that norm unravels, then other norms and prohibitions start unraveling. And that makes for a more dangerous world. And that then requires even more difficult choices and more difficult responses in the future.

Over 4—1,400 people were gassed. Over 400 of them were children. This is not something we've fabricated. This is not something that we are looking—are using as an excuse for military action. As I said last night, I was elected to end wars, not start them. I've spent the last 4½ years doing everything I can to reduce our reliance on military power as a means of meeting our international obligations and protecting the American people. But what I also know is, is that there are times where we have to make hard choices if we're going to stand up for the things that we care about. And I believe that this is one of those times.

And if we end up using the U.N. Security Council not as a means of enforcing international norms and international law, but rather as a barrier to acting on behalf of international

norms and international law, then I think people, rightly, are going to be pretty skeptical about the system and whether it can work to protect those children that we saw in those videos.

And sometimes, the further we get from the horrors of that, the easier it is to rationalize not making tough choices. And I understand that. This is not convenient. This is not something that I think a lot of folks around the world find an appetizing set of choices. But the question is, do these norms mean something? And if we're not acting, what does that say?

If we're just issuing another statement of condemnation, if we're passing resolutions saying, wasn't that terrible? If people who decry international inaction in Rwanda and say how terrible it is that there are these human rights violations that take place around the world and why aren't we doing something about it—and they always look to the United States. Why isn't the United States doing something about this, the most powerful nation on Earth? Why are you allowing these terrible things to happen? And then, if the international community turns around when we're saying it's time to take some responsibility and says, "Well, hold on a second, we're not sure," that erodes our ability to maintain the kind of norms that we're looking at.

Now, I know that was a lengthy answer and you had a second part to your question.

The conversation I had with President Putin was on the margins of the plenary session, and it was a candid and constructive conversation, which characterizes my relationship with him. I know, as I've said before, everybody is always trying to look for body language and all that. But the truth of the matter is, is that my interactions with him tend to be very straightforward. We discussed Syria, and that was primarily the topic of conversation. Mr. Snowden did not come up beyond me saying that—reemphasizing that where we have common interests, I think it's important for the two of us to work together.

And on Syria, I said, listen, I don't expect us to agree on this issue of chemical weapons use, although it is possible that after the U.N.

inspectors' report, it may be more difficult for Mr. Putin to maintain his current position about the evidence. But what I did say is that we both agree that the underlying conflict can only be resolved through a political transition as envisioned by the Geneva I and Geneva II process. And so we need to move forward together. Even if you—the U.S. and Russia and other countries disagree on this specific issue of how to respond to chemical weapons use, it remains important for us to work together to try to urge all parties in the conflict to try to resolve it.

Because we've got 4 million people internally displaced. We've got millions of people in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon who are desperate, and the situation is only getting worse. And that's not in anybody's interests. It's not in America's interest. It's not in Russia's interest. It's not in the interest of the people in the region, and obviously, it's not in the interest of Syrians who've seen their lives completely disrupted and their country shattered.

So that is going to continue to be a project of ours. And that does speak to an issue that has been raised back home around this whole issue. You've heard some people say, well, we think if you're going to do something, you got to do something big, and maybe this isn't big enough or maybe it's too late, or other responses like that. And what I've tried to explain is, we may not solve the whole problem, but this particular problem of using chemical weapons on children, this one we might have an impact on, and that's worth acting on. That's important to us.

And what I've also said is, is that as far as the underlying conflict is concerned, unless the international community is willing to put massive numbers of troops on the ground—and I know nobody is signing up for that—we're not going to get a long-term military solution for the country. And we're—and that is something that can only come about, I think, if, as different as our perspectives may be, myself, Mr. Putin, and others are willing to set aside those differences and put some pressure on the parties on the ground. Okay?

Brianna [Brianna Keilar, CNN].

Syria/Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force

Q. On the resolution to authorize the use of force, one of the big challenges right now isn't just Republicans, but it's from some of your loyal Democrats. It seems that the more they hear from classified briefings that the less likely they are to support you. If the full Congress doesn't pass this, will you go ahead with the strike? And also, Senator Susan Collins—one of the few Republicans who breaks through her party to give you support at times—she says: "What if we execute the strike, and then Asad decides to use chemical weapons again? Do we strike again?" And many Democrats are asking that as well. How do you answer her question?

The President. Well, first of all, in terms of the votes and the process in Congress, I knew this was going to be a heavy lift. I said that on Saturday when I said we're going to take it to Congress. Our polling operations are pretty good. I tend to have a pretty good sense of what current popular opinion is. And for the American people, who have been through over a decade of war now, with enormous sacrifice in blood and treasure, any hint of further military entanglements in the Middle East are going to be viewed with suspicion. And that suspicion will probably be even stronger in my party than in the Republican Party, since a lot of the people who supported me remember that I opposed the war in Iraq.

And what's also true is, is that that experience with the war in Iraq colors how people view this situation, not just back home in America, but also here in Europe and around the world. That's the prism through a lot of people—through which a lot of people are analyzing the situation.

So I understand the skepticism. I think it is very important, therefore, for us to work through systematically making the case to every Senator and every Member of Congress. And that's what we're doing.

I dispute a little bit, Brianna, the notion that people come out of classified briefings and they're less in favor of it. I think that when they

go through the classified briefings, they feel pretty confident that, in fact, chemical weapons were used and that the Asad regime used them.

The—where you will see resistance is people being worried about a slippery slope and how effective a limited action might be. And our response, based on my discussions with our military, is that we can have a response that is limited, that is proportional, that—when I say “limited,” it’s both in time and in scope—but that is meaningful and that degrades Asad’s capacity to deliver chemical weapons not just this time, but also in the future, and serves as a strong deterrent.

Now, is it possible that Asad doubles down in the face of our action and uses chemical weapons more widely? I suppose anything is possible, but it wouldn’t be wise. I think at that point, mobilizing the international community would be easier, not harder. I think it would be pretty hard for the U.N. Security Council at that point to continue to resist the requirement for action, and we would gladly join with an international coalition to make sure that it stops.

So the—one of the biggest concerns of the American people—certain Members of Congress may have different concerns; there may be certain Members of Congress who say we’ve got to do even more or claim to have previously criticized me for not hitting Asad and now are saying they’re going to vote no, and you’ll have to ask them exactly how they square that circle. But for the American people at least, the concern really has to do with understanding that what we’re describing here would be limited and proportionate and designed to address this problem of chemical weapons use and upholding a norm that helps keep all of us safe.

And that is going to be the case that I try to make not just to Congress, but to the American people over the coming days. Okay?

Syria/Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Just a follow-up: Must you have full Congressional approval? What if the Senate votes

yes and the House does not, for instance? Would you go ahead with the strike?

The President. Brianna, I think it would be a mistake for me to jump the gun and speculate, because right now I’m working to get as much support as possible out of Congress. But I’ll repeat something that I said in Sweden when I was asked a similar question. I did not put this before Congress just as a political ploy or as symbolism. I put it before Congress because I could not honestly claim that the threat posed by Asad’s use of chemical weapons on innocent civilians and women and children posed a imminent, direct threat to the United States. In that situation, obviously, I don’t worry about Congress. We do what we have to do to keep the American people safe. I could not say that it was immediately, directly going to have an impact on our allies. Again, in those situations, I would act right away. This wasn’t even a situation like Libya, where you’ve got troops rolling towards Benghazi and you have a concern about time in terms of saving somebody right away.

This was an event that happened. My military assured me that we could act today, tomorrow, a month from now; that we could do so proportionately, but meaningfully. And in that situation, I think it is important for us to have a serious debate in the United States about these issues.

Because these are going to be the kinds of national security threats that are most likely to recur over the next 5, 10 years. They’re very few countries who are going to go at us directly. I mean, we have to be vigilant, but our military is unmatched. Those countries that are large and powerful like Russia or China, we have the kind of relationship with them where we’re not getting in conflicts of that sort. At least over the last several decades, there’s been a recognition that neither country benefits from that kind of great power conflict.

So the kinds of national security threats that we’re going to confront, they’re terrorist threats; they’re failed states; they are the proliferation of deadly weapons. And in those circumstances, a President is going to have to make a series of decisions about which one of

these threats over the long term starts making us less and less safe. And where we can work internationally, we should.

There are going to be times, though, where—as is true here—the international community is stuck for a whole variety of political reasons. And if that’s the case, people are going to look to the United States and say, what are you going to do about it?

And that’s not a responsibility that we always enjoy. There was a leader of a smaller country who I’ve spoken to over the last several days who said: “You know, I don’t envy you, because I’m a small country and nobody expects me to do anything about chemical weapons around the world. They know I have no capacity to do something.”

And it’s tough because people do look to the United States. And the question for the American people is, is that responsibility that we’ll be willing to bear? And I believe that when you have a limited, proportional strike like this—not Iraq, not putting boots on the ground; not some long, drawn-out affair; not without any risks, but with manageable risks—that we should be willing to bear that responsibility.

Chuck Todd [NBC News].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning—or good evening. I think it’s still “good morning” for—back home.

The President. By tonight it will be tonight—

Q. Fair enough.

The President. —when we get back home. [Laughter] Yes.

Syria/Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force

Q. I think we’re all relieved. I want to follow up on Brianna’s question, because it seems these Members of Congress are simply responding to their constituents—

The President. Yes.

Q. —and you’re seeing a lot these town halls, and it seems as if the more you press your case, the more John Kerry presses the case on your behalf, the more the opposition grows. And maybe it’s just—or the more the opposition becomes vocal. Why do you think

you’ve struggled with that? And you keep talking about a limited mission. We have a report that indicates you’ve actually asked for an expanded list of targets in Syria, and one military official told NBC News, he characterized it as “mission creep.” Can you respond to that report?

The President. That report is inaccurate. I’m not going to comment on operational issues that are sourced by some military official. One thing I’ve got a pretty clear idea about is what I talked with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff about, and what we have consistently talked about is something limited and proportional that would degrade Mr. Assad’s capabilities.

In terms of opposition, Chuck, I expected this. This is hard, and I was under no illusions when I embarked on this path. But I think it’s the right thing to do. I think it’s good for our democracy. We will be more effective if we are unified going forward.

And part of what we knew would be—that there would be some politics and interjecting themselves—

Q. You believe it’s all politics?

The President. No, I said “some.” But what I have also said is, is that the American people have gone through a lot when it comes to the military over the last decade or so. And so I understand that. And when you starting talking about chemical weapons and their proliferation, those images of those bodies can sometimes be forgotten pretty quickly. The news cycle moves on.

Frankly, if we weren’t talking about the need for an international response right now, this wouldn’t be what everybody would be asking about. There would be some resolutions that were being proffered in the United Nations and the usual hocus-pocus, but the world and the country would have moved on.

So trying to impart a sense of urgency about this—why we can’t have an environment in which, over time, people start thinking, we can get away with chemical weapons use—it’s a hard sell, but it’s something I believe in. And as I explained to Brianna, in this context, me making sure that the American people under-

stand it, I think, is important before I take action.

Jon Karl [ABC News].

Syria/Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. One of your closest allies in the House said yesterday, “When you’ve got 97 percent of your constituents saying no, it’s kind of hard to say yes.” Why should Members of Congress go against the will of their constituents and to support your decision on this? And I still haven’t heard a direct response to Brianna’s question: If Congress fails to authorize this, will you go forward with an attack on Syria?

The President. Right, and you’re not getting a direct response. [Laughter] Brianna asked the question very well. I mean, did you think that—

Q. Well, it’s a pretty basic question.

The President. —I was going to give you a different answer? No. [Laughter] What I have said, and I will repeat, is that I put this before Congress for a reason. I think we will be more effective and stronger if, in fact, Congress authorizes this action. I’m not going to engage in parlor games now, Jonathan, about whether or not it’s going to pass when I’m talking substantively to Congress about why this is important and talking to the American people about why this is important.

Now, with respect to Congress and how they should respond to constituency concerns, I do consider it part of my job to help make the case and to explain to the American people exactly why I think this is the right thing to do. And it’s conceivable that at the end of the day, I don’t persuade a majority of the American people that it’s the right thing to do. And then, each Member of Congress is going to have to decide, if I think it’s the right thing to do for America’s national security and the world’s national security, then how do I vote? And you know what? That’s what you’re supposed to do as a Member of Congress. Ultimately, you listen to your constituents, but you’ve also got to make some decisions about what you believe is right for America.

And that’s the same for me as President of the United States. There are a whole bunch of decisions that I make that are unpopular, as you well know. But I do so because I think they’re the right thing to do. And I trust my constituents want me to offer my best judgment. That’s why they elected me. That’s why they reelected me even after there were some decisions I made that they disagreed with. And I would hope that Members of Congress would end up feeling the same way.

The last point I would make: These kinds of interventions, these kinds of actions are always unpopular because they seem distant and removed. And I want to make sure I’m being clear. I’m not drawing an analogy to World War II other than to say when London was getting bombed it was profoundly unpopular both in Congress and around the country to help the British. It doesn’t mean it wasn’t the right thing to do. It just means people are struggling with jobs and bills to pay and they don’t want their sons or daughters put in harm’s way and these entanglements far away are dangerous and different.

I—to bring the analogy closer to home, the intervention in Kosovo, very unpopular. But ultimately, I think it was the right thing to do. And the international community should be glad that it came together to do it.

When people say that it is a terrible stain on all of us that hundreds of thousands of people were slaughtered in Rwanda, well, imagine if Rwanda was going on right now, and we asked, should we intervene in Rwanda? I think it’s fair to say that it probably wouldn’t poll real well.

So, typically, when any kind of military action is popular, it’s because either there’s been a very clear, direct threat to us—9/11—or an administration uses various hooks to suggest that American interests were directly threatened, like in Panama or Grenada. And sometimes, those hooks are more persuasive than others, but typically, they’re not put before Congress. And again, we just went through something pretty tough with respect to Iraq. So all that, I guess, provides some context for why you might expect people to be resistant to it.

Q. But your Deputy National Security Adviser said that it is not your intention to attack if Congress doesn't approve it. Is he right?

The President. I don't think that's exactly what he said. But I think I've answered the question.

Major Garrett [CBS News].

Syria/Chemical Weapons

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Those of us who remember covering your campaign remember you saying that militarily, when the United States acts, it's not just important what it does, but how it goes about doing it; and that even when America sets its course, it's important to engage the international community and listen to different ideas even as it's pursuing that action. I wonder if you leave here and return to Washington, seeing the skepticism there, hearing it here, with any different ideas that might delay military action. For example, some in Congress have suggested giving the Syrian regime 45 days to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention, get rid of its chemical stockpiles, do something that would enhance international sense of accountability for Syria, but delay military action. Are you, Mr. President, looking at any of these ideas? Or are we on a fast track to military action as soon as Congress renders its judgment one way or the other?

The President. I am listening to all these ideas. And some of them are constructive. And I'm listening to ideas in Congress, and I'm listening to ideas here. Look, I want to repeat here: My goal is to maintain the international norm on banning chemical weapons. I want that enforcement to be real. I want it to be serious. I want people to understand that gassing innocent people, delivering chemical weapons against children is not something we do. It's prohibited in active wars between countries. We certainly don't do it against kids. And we've got to stand up for that principle.

If there are tools that we can use to ensure that, obviously my preference would be, again, to act internationally in a serious way and to make sure that Mr. Asad gets the message.

I'm not itching for military action. Recall, Major, that I have been criticized for the last couple of years by some of the folks who are now saying they would oppose these strikes for not striking. And I think that I have a well-deserved reputation for taking very seriously and soberly the idea of military engagement.

So we will look at these ideas. So far, at least, I have not seen ideas presented that, as a practical matter, I think would do the job. But this is a situation where part of the reason I wanted to foster debate was to make sure that everybody thought about both the ramifications of action and inaction.

Q. So currently, the only way to enforce this international norm is militarily and even giving us—the Asad regime extra time would not achieve your goals?

The President. What I'm saying, Major, is that so far, what we've seen is an escalation by the Asad regime of chemical weapons use.

You'll recall that several months ago, I said we now say with some confidence that at a small level Asad has used chemical weapons. We not only sent warnings to Asad, but we demarched, meaning we sent a strong message through countries that have relationships with Asad, that he should not be doing this. And rather than hold the line, we ended up with what we saw on August 21. So this is not as if we haven't tested the proposition that the guy—or at least generals under his charge—can show restraint when it comes to this stuff. And they've got one of the largest stockpiles in the world.

But I want to emphasize that we continue to consult with our international partners. I'm listening to Congress. I'm not just doing the talking. And if there are good ideas that are worth pursuing then I'm going to be open to it.

I will take last question. Tangi, AFP [Tangi Quemener, Agence France-Presse].

National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program/President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil/President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Yesterday night you had two unscheduled bilateral meetings with your Brazilian and Mexican counter-

parts after they voiced very strong concerns about being allegedly targeted by the NSA. What was your message to them? And do these revelations—that constant stream of revelations since the start of this summer—make it harder for you to build confidence with your partners in international forums such as this one?

The President. Good. The—I did meet with President Rouseff as well as President Peña Nieto, of Brazil and Mexico, respectively, to discuss these allegations that were made in the press about the NSA. I won't share with you all the details of the conversation, but what I said to them is consistent with what I've said publicly. The United States has an intelligence agency, and our intelligence agency's job is to gather information that's not available through public sources. If they were available through public sources, then they wouldn't be an intelligence agency. In that sense, what we do is similar to what countries around the world do with their intelligence services.

But what is true is that we are bigger; we have greater capabilities. The difference between our capabilities and other countries probably tracks the differences in military capabilities between countries. And what I've said is that because technology is changing so rapidly, because these capabilities are growing, it is important for us to step back and review what it is that we're doing, because just because we can get information doesn't necessarily always mean that we should.

There may be costs and benefits to doing certain things, and we've got to weigh those. And I think that, traditionally, what's happened over decades is the general assumption was, well, you just—whatever you can get, you just kind of pull in, and then you kind of sift through later and try to figure out what's useful. The nature of technology and the legitimate concerns around privacy and civil liberties means that it's important for us on the front end to say, all right, are we actually going to get useful information here? And if not—or how useful is it? If it's not that important, should we be more constrained in how we use certain technical capabilities?

Now, just more specifically then, on Brazil and Mexico, I said that I would look into the allegations. I mean, part of the problem here is, we get these through the press, and then I've got to go back and find out what's going on with respect to these particular allegations. I don't subscribe to all these newspapers, and—although I think the NSA does, now at least. [Laughter]

And then, what I assured President Rouseff and President Peña Nieto is, is that they should take—that I take these allegations very seriously; I understand their concerns; I understand the concerns of the Mexican and Brazilian people—and that we will work with their teams to resolve what is a source of tension.

Now, the last thing I'd say about this, though, is just because there are tensions doesn't mean that it overrides all the incredibly wide-ranging interests that we share with so many of these countries. And there's a reason why I went to Brazil. There's a reason why I invited President Rouseff to come to the United States. Brazil is an incredibly important country. It is a amazing success story in terms of a transition from authoritarianism to democracy. It is one of the most dynamic economies in the world. And obviously, for the two largest nations in the hemisphere to have a strong relationship, that can only be good for the people of our two countries, as well as the region. Same is true with Mexico, one of our closest friends, allies, and neighbors.

And so we will work through this particular issue. It does not detract from the larger concerns that we have and the opportunities that we both want to take advantage of.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you, St. Petersburg.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:55 p.m. in the press center of the Constantine Palace. In his remarks, he referred to former National Security Agency contractor Edward J. Snowden, who is accused of leaking classified documents to members of the news media. A reporter referred to Rep. Elijah E. Cummings.

Joint Statement by the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom September 6, 2013

The Leaders and Representatives of Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America made the following statement on the margins of the Group of 20 Nations Leader's Meeting in Saint Petersburg, Russia:

The international norm against the use of chemical weapons is longstanding and universal. The use of chemical weapons anywhere diminishes the security of people everywhere. Left unchallenged, it increases the risk of further use and proliferation of these weapons.

We condemn in the strongest terms the horrific chemical weapons attack in the suburbs of Damascus on August 21st that claimed the lives of so many men, women, and children. The evidence clearly points to the Syrian government being responsible for the attack, which is part of a pattern of chemical weapons use by the regime.

We call for a strong international response to this grave violation of the world's rules and conscience that will send a clear message that this kind of atrocity can never be repeated. Those who perpetrated these crimes must be held accountable.

Signatories have consistently supported a strong UN Security Council Resolution, given the Security Council's responsibilities to lead the international response, but recognize that the Council remains paralyzed as it has been for two and a half years. The world cannot wait for endless failed processes that can only lead to increased suffering in Syria and regional instability. We support efforts undertaken by the United States and other countries to reinforce

the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons.

We commit to supporting longer term international efforts, including through the United Nations, to address the enduring security challenge posed by Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles. Signatories have also called for the UN fact finding mission to present its results as soon as possible, and for the Security Council to act accordingly.

We condemn in the strongest terms all human rights violations in Syria on all sides. More than 100,000 people have been killed in the conflict, more than 2 million people have become refugees, and approximately 5 million are internally displaced. Recognizing that Syria's conflict has no military solution, we reaffirm our commitment to seek a peaceful political settlement through full implementation of the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. We are committed to a political solution which will result in a united, inclusive and democratic Syria.

We have contributed generously to the latest United Nations (UN) and ICRC appeals for humanitarian assistance and will continue to provide support to address the growing humanitarian needs in Syria and their impact on regional countries. We welcome the contributions announced at the meeting of donor countries on the margins of the G20. We call upon all parties to allow humanitarian actors safe and unhindered access to those in need.

European signatories will continue to engage in promoting a common European position.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks During a Roundtable Discussion With Civil Society Leaders in St. Petersburg, Russia September 6, 2013

Well, I just want to say thank you to all the participants in this roundtable. This is a incred-

ible and very diverse group of civil society leaders. And this is something that I really enjoy