

Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 17. The letter

referred to Executive Order 13661, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Remarks on the Situation in Ukraine *March 17, 2014*

Good morning, everybody. In recent months, as the citizens of Ukraine have made their voices heard, we have been guided by a fundamental principle: The future of Ukraine must be decided by the people of Ukraine. That means Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected and international law must be upheld.

And so Russia's decision to send troops into Crimea has rightly drawn global condemnation. From the start, the United States has mobilized the international community in support of Ukraine to isolate Russia for its actions and to reassure our allies and partners. We saw this international unity again over the weekend, when Russia stood alone in the U.N. Security Council defending its actions in Crimea. And as I told President Putin yesterday, the referendum in Crimea was a clear violation of Ukrainian constitutions and international law and it will not be recognized by the international community.

Today I'm announcing a series of measures that will continue to increase the cost on Russia and on those responsible for what is happening in Ukraine. First, as authorized by the Executive order I signed 2 weeks ago, we are imposing sanctions on specific individuals responsible for undermining the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and Government of Ukraine. We're making it clear that there are consequences for their actions.

Second, I have signed a new Executive order that expands the scope of our sanctions. As an initial step, I'm authorizing sanctions on Russian officials, entities operating in the arms sector in Russia, and individuals who provide material support to senior officials of the Russian Government. And if Russia continues to interfere in Ukraine, we stand ready to impose further sanctions.

Third, we're continuing our close consultations with our European partners, who today in Brussels moved ahead with their own sanctions

against Russia. Tonight Vice President Biden departs for Europe, where he will meet with the leaders of our NATO allies: Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. And I'll be traveling to Europe next week. Our message will be clear: As NATO allies, we have a solemn commitment to our collective defense, and we will uphold this commitment.

Fourth, we'll continue to make clear to Russia that further provocations will achieve nothing except to further isolate Russia and diminish its place in the world. The international community will continue to stand together to oppose any violations of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, and continued Russian military intervention in Ukraine will only deepen Russia's diplomatic isolation and exact a greater toll on the Russian economy.

Going forward, we can calibrate our response based on whether Russia chooses to escalate or to deescalate the situation. Now, I believe there's still a path to resolve this situation diplomatically in a way that addresses the interests of both Russia and Ukraine. That includes Russia pulling its forces in Crimea back to their bases, supporting the deployment of additional international monitors in Ukraine, and engaging in dialogue with the Ukrainian Government, which has indicated its openness to pursuing constitutional reform as they move forward towards elections this spring.

But throughout this process, we're going to stand firm in our unwavering support for Ukraine. As I told Prime Minister Yatsenyuk last week, the United States stands with the people of Ukraine and their right to determine their own destiny. We're going to keep working with Congress and our international partners to offer Ukraine the economic support that it needs to weather this crisis and to improve the daily lives of the Ukrainian people.

And as we go forward, we'll continue to look at the range of ways we can help our Ukrainian

friends achieve their universal rights and the security, prosperity, and dignity that they deserve. Thanks very much. And Jay, I think, will be available for questions. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at

the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; and White House Press Secretary James F. “Jay” Carney. He also referred to Executive Orders 13660 and 13661, which are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority March 17, 2014

*President Obama.* Well, I want to welcome President Abbas to the Oval Office. It was a year ago this week that I had the opportunity to visit the Palestinian Territories and very much appreciated the hospitality that President Abbas showed when I was there. I had a wonderful time meeting with a wide range of civil society and officials and business leaders in the Palestinian Territories, including young people who were inspiring and, I think, had great hope for the future.

Today we’re going to spend the bulk of our time talking about something that we’ve been working on for a very long time and obviously President Abbas has been working on a long time, and that is, how do we achieve a comprehensive peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

And I have to commend President Abbas. He has been somebody who has consistently renounced violence, has consistently sought a diplomatic and peaceful solution that allows for two states, side by side, in peace and security: a state that allows for the dignity and sovereignty of the Palestinian people and a state that allows for Israelis to feel secure and at peace with their neighbors.

This is obviously an elusive goal, and there’s a reason why it’s taken decades for us to even get to the point where we are now. But we remain convinced that there is an opportunity. And I think everybody understands the outlines of what a peace deal would look like, involving a territorial compromise on both sides based on ’67 lines with mutually agreed upon swaps that would ensure that Israel was secure,

but would also ensure that the Palestinians have a sovereign state in which they can achieve the aspirations that they’ve held for so long.

Secretary Kerry is here today and has been working diligently with all sides. And as I said to Prime Minister Netanyahu when he was here just a couple of weeks ago, I believe that now is the time for not just the leaders of both sides, but also the peoples of both sides, to embrace this opportunity for peace. But we’re going to have a lot of details that we’re going to have to discuss. It’s very hard; it’s very challenging. We’re going to have to take some tough political decisions and risks if we’re able to move it forward. And my hope is, is that we can continue to see progress in the coming days and weeks.

I also want to point out that the Palestinian Authority has continued to try to build strong institutions in preparation for a day in which the Palestinians have their own state, and I will continue to emphasize the importance of rule of law, transparency, and effective reform so that not only do the Palestinians ultimately have a state on paper, but more importantly, they have one that actually delivers on behalf of their people.

The United States obviously has been a strong supporter of the Palestinian Authority. We’re the largest humanitarian donor and continue to help to try to foster economic development and opportunity and prosperity for people, particularly young people like those that I met.