

gional threats. A new generation of young Africans is making its voice heard.

Africa's rise means opportunity for all of us, including the opportunity to transform the relationship between the United States and Africa. As I said in Cape Town last year, it's time for a new model of partnership between America and Africa: a partnership of equals that focuses on African capacity to solve problems and on Africa's capacity to grow. And that's why we're here.

And to my fellow leaders, I want to thank you and your teams for helping us to shape our agenda today. Our work can build on the valuable contributions already made this week by civil society groups, the private sector, young Africans, and—at our first session of this summit—our faith communities, which do so much to sustain the U.S.-Africa relationship. Different though they may be, our faith traditions remind us of the inherent dignity of every human being and that our work as nations must be rooted in empathy and compassion for each other, as brothers and as sisters.

Now, today is an opportunity to focus on three broad areas where we can make progress together.

Number one, we have the opportunity to expand trade that creates jobs. The new trade deals and investments I announced yesterday are an important step. And today we can focus on what we can do, as governments, to accelerate that of investment: economic and regulatory reforms, regional integration, and development so that growth is broad based, especially

among women, who must be empowered for economies to truly flourish.

Second, we have the opportunity to strengthen the governance upon which economic growth and free societies depend. Today we can focus on the ingredients of progress: rule of law, open government, accountable and transparent institutions, strong civil societies, and respect for the universal human rights of all people.

And finally, we have the opportunity to deepen our security cooperation against common threats. As I said, African security forces and African peacekeepers are in the lead across the continent. As your partner, the United States is proud to support these efforts. And today we can focus on how we can continue to strengthen Africa's capacity to meet transitional threats—transnational threats and, in so doing, make all of our nations more secure.

So, in short, we are here not just to talk. We are here to take action: concrete steps to build on Africa's progress and forge the partnerships of equals that we seek; tangible steps to deliver more prosperity, more security, and more justice to our citizens. So to my fellow leaders, again, thank you so much for being here. I look forward to our work together today.

And at this point, I want to invite President Aziz of Mauritania, the current Chairman of the African Union, to say a few words.

President Aziz.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:17 a.m. at the Department of State.

The President's News Conference August 6, 2014

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated. As I think everyone knows by now, this first U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit has been the largest gathering we've ever hosted with African heads of state and government, and that includes about 50 motorcades. So I want to begin by thanking the people of Washington, DC, for helping us host this historic event and especially for their patience with the traffic.

As I've said, this summit reflects the reality that even as Africa continues to face great challenges, we're also seeing the emergence of a new, more prosperous Africa. Africa's progress is being led by Africans, including leaders here today. I want to take this opportunity again to thank my fellow leaders for being here. Rather than a lot of prepared speeches, our sessions today were genuine discussions, a chance to truly listen and to try to come together around

some pragmatic steps that we can take together. And that's what we've done this week.

First, we made important progress in expanding our trade. The \$33 billion in new trade and investments that I announced yesterday will help spur African development and support tens of thousands of American jobs. With major new commitments to our Power Africa initiative, we've tripled our goal and now aim to bring electricity to 60 million African homes and businesses. And today I reiterated that we'll continue to work with Congress to achieve a seamless and long-term renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

We agreed that Africa's growth depends, first and foremost, on continued reforms in Africa, by Africans. The leaders here pledged to step up efforts to pursue reforms that attract investment, reduce barriers that stifle trade—especially between African countries—and to promote regional integration. And as I announced yesterday, the United States will increase our support to help build Africa's capacity to trade with itself and with the world.

Ultimately, Africa's prosperity depends on Africa's greatest resource: its people. And I've been very encouraged by the desire of leaders here to partner with us in supporting young entrepreneurs, including through our Young African Leaders Initiative. I think there's an increasing recognition that if countries are going to reach their full economic potential, then they have to invest in women—their education, their skills—and protect them from gender-based violence. And that was a topic of conversation this afternoon. And this week, the United States announced a range of initiatives to help empower women across Africa.

Our New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition continues to grow, aiming to lift 50 million Africans from poverty. In our fight against HIV/AIDS, we'll work with 10 African countries to help them double the number of their children on lifesaving antiretroviral drugs. And even as the United States is deploying some of our medical first responders to West Africa to help control the Ebola outbreak, we're also working to strengthen public health systems, including joining with the African

Union to pursue the creation of an African Centers for Disease Control.

I also want to note that the American people are renewing their commitment to Africa. Today InterAction, the leading alliance of American NGOs, is announcing that over the next 3 years, its members will invest \$4 billion to promote maternal health, children's health, and the delivery of vaccines and drugs. So this is not just a Government effort, it is also an effort that's spurred on by the private sector. Combined with the investments we announced yesterday—and the commitments made today at the symposium hosted by our spouses—that means this summit has helped to mobilize some \$37 billion for Africa's progress on top of obviously the substantial efforts that have been made in the past.

Second, we addressed good governance, which is a foundation of economic growth and free societies. Some African nations are making impressive progress. But we see troubling restrictions on universal rights. So today was an opportunity to highlight the importance of rule of law, open and accountable institutions, strong civil societies, and protection of human rights for all citizens and all communities. And I made the point during our discussion that nations that uphold these rights and principles will ultimately be more prosperous and more economically successful.

In particular, we agreed to step up our collective efforts against the corruption that costs African economies tens of billions of dollars every year, money that ought to be invested in the people of Africa. Several leaders raised the idea of a new partnership to combat illicit finance, and there was widespread agreement. So we decided to convene our experts and develop an action plan to promote the transparency that is essential to economic growth.

Third, we're deepening our security cooperation to meet common threats, from terrorism to human trafficking. We're launching a new Security Governance Initiative to help our African countries continue to build strong, professional security forces to provide for their own security. And we're starting with Kenya, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, and Tunisia.

During our discussions, our West African partners made it clear that they want to increase their capacity to respond to crises. So the United States will launch a new effort to bolster the region's early warning and response network and increase their ability to share information about emerging crises.

We also agreed to make significant new investments in African peacekeeping. The United States will provide additional equipment to African peacekeepers in Somalia and the Central African Republic. We will support the African Union's efforts to strengthen its peacekeeping institutions. And most importantly, we're launching a new African peacekeeping rapid response partnership with the goal of quickly deploying African peacekeepers in support of U.N. or AU missions. And we'll join with six countries that in recent years have demonstrated a track record as peacekeepers: Ghana, Senegal, Rwanda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Uganda. And we're going to invite countries beyond Africa to join us in supporting this effort, because the entire world has a stake in the success of peacekeeping in Africa.

In closing, I just want to say that this has been an extraordinary event, an extraordinary summit. Given the success that we've had this week, we agreed that summits like this can be a critical part of our work together going forward, a forcing mechanism for decisions and action. So we agreed that the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit will be a recurring event to hold ourselves accountable for our commitments and to sustain our momentum. And I'll strongly encourage my successor to carry on this work, because Africa must know that they will always have a strong and reliable partner in the United States of America.

So with that, I'm going to take a couple of questions. I'm going to start with Julie Pace of Associated Press. Where's Julie? There she is.

Ebola Outbreak in West Africa/Drug Treatments for Ebola

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. There's been a lot of discussion surrounding this summit about the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. And there's an untested and unproved—unap-

proved drug in the U.S. that appears to be helping some of the Americans who are infected. Is your administration considering at all sending supplies of this drug if it becomes available to some of these countries in West Africa? And could you discuss a bit the ethics of either providing an untested drug to a foreign country or providing it only to Americans and not to other countries that are harder hit if it could possibly save lives?

The President. Well, I think we've got to let the science guide us. And I don't think all the information is in on whether this drug is helpful. What we do know is that the Ebola virus, both currently and in the past, is controllable if you have a strong public health infrastructure in place.

And the countries that have been affected are the first to admit that what's happened here is, is that their public health systems have been overwhelmed. They weren't able to identify and then isolate cases quickly enough. You did not have a strong trust relationship between some of the communities that were affected and public health workers. As a consequence, it spread more rapidly than has been typical with the periodic Ebola outbreaks that have occurred previously.

But despite obviously the extraordinary pain and hardship of the families and persons who've been affected, and despite the fact that we have to take this very seriously, it is important to remind ourselves, this is not an airborne disease; this is one that can be controlled and contained very effectively if we use the right protocols.

So what we've done is to make sure that we're surging not just U.S. resources, but we've reached out to European partners and partners from other countries, working with the WHO. Let's get all the health workers that we need on the ground. Let's help to bolster the systems that they already have in place. Let's nip as early as possible any additional outbreaks of the disease. And then during the course of that process, I think it's entirely appropriate for us to see if there are additional drugs or medical treatments that can improve

the survivability of what is a very deadly and obviously brutal disease.

So we're going to—we're focusing on the public health approach right now because we know how to do that. But I will continue to seek information about what we're learning with respect to these drugs going forward.

Q. If this drug proves to be effective, would you support fast-tracking its approval in the United States?

The President. I think it's premature for me to say that because I don't have enough information. I don't have enough data right now to offer an opinion on that.

Jon Karl, ABC News.

The President's Use of Executive Authority/Immigration Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. When you were running for President, you said: "The biggest problems we're facing right now have to do with George Bush trying to bring more and more power into the executive branch and not go through Congress at all. And that's what I intend to reverse." So my question to you: Has Congress's inability to do anything significant given you a green light to push the limits of executive power, even a duty to do so? Or put another way, does it bother you more to be accused of being an imperial President, pushing those limits or to be accused of being a do-nothing President who couldn't get anything done because you faced a dysfunctional Congress?

The President. Well, I think that I never have a green light. I'm bound by the Constitution; I'm bound by separation of powers. There are some things we can't do.

Congress has the power of the purse, for example. I would love to fund a large infrastructure proposal right now that would put millions of people to work and boost our GDP. We know we've got roads and bridges and airports and electrical grids that need to be rebuilt. But without the cooperation of Congress, what I can do is speed up the permitting process, for example. I can make sure that we're working with the private sector to see if we can channel investment into much-needed projects. But ul-

timately, Congress has to pass a budget and authorize spending. So I don't have a green light.

What I am consistently going to do is, wherever I have the legal authorities to make progress on behalf of middle class Americans and folks working to get into the middle class, whether it's by making sure that Federal contractors are paying a fair wage to their workers, making sure that women have the opportunity to make sure that they're getting paid the same as men for doing the same job, where I have the capacity to expand some of the student loan programs that we've already put in place so that repayments are a little more affordable for college graduates—I'm going to take—I'm going to seize those opportunities. And that's what I think the American people expect me to do.

My preference in all these instances is to work with Congress, because not only can Congress do more, but it's going to be longer lasting. And when you look at, for example, congressional inaction, and in particular, the inaction on the part of House Republicans, when it comes to immigration reform, now, here's an area where, as I've said before, not only the American people want to see action, not only is there 80-percent overlap between what Republicans say they want and Democrats say they want, we actually passed a bill out of the Senate that was bipartisan.

And in those circumstances, what the American people expect is that, despite the differences between the parties, there should at least be the capacity to move forward on things we agree on. And that's not what we're seeing right now. So, in the face of that kind of dysfunction, what I can do is scour our authorities to try to make progress.

And we're going to make sure that every time we take one of these steps that we are working within the confines of my executive power. But I promise you, the American people don't want me just standing around twiddling my thumbs and waiting for Congress to get something done. Even as we take these executive actions, I'm going to continue to reach out to Democrats and Republicans—to the Speaker, to the leadership on both sides and in

both Chambers—to try to come up with formulas where we can make progress, even if it's incremental.

Q. Do you believe you have the power to grant work permits to those who are here illegally, as some of your supporters have suggested?

The President. What I certainly recognize with respect to immigration reform—and I've said this in the past—is that we have a broken system. It's underresourced, and we've got to make choices in terms of how we allocate personnel and resources.

So, if I'm going to, for example, send more immigration judges down to the border to process some of these unaccompanied children that have arrived at the border, then that's coming from someplace else, and we're going to have to prioritize. That's well within our authorities and prosecutorial discretion.

My preference would be an actual comprehensive immigration law. And we already have a bipartisan law that would solve a whole bunch of these problems. Until that happens, I'm going to have to make choices. That's what I was elected to do.

Margaret Talev, Bloomberg.

Corporate Inversions

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Along the lines of executive authority, Treasury Secretary Jack Lew has previously said that the executive branch of Government doesn't have the authority to slow or stop corporate inversions, the practice that you have called distasteful, unpatriotic, et cetera. But now he is reviewing options to do so. And this is an issue that a lot of business, probably including some of the ones who were paying a lot of attention to this summit, are interested in. So what I wanted to ask you was, what prompted this apparent reversal? What actions are now under consideration? Will you consider an Executive order that would limit or ban such companies from getting Federal contracts? And how soon would you like to see Treasury act, given Congress's schedule?

The President. Just to review why we're concerned here. You have accountants going to some big corporations—multinational corpora-

tions, but that are clearly U.S.-based and have the bulk of their operations in the United States—and these accountants are saying, you know what, we found a great loophole; if you just flip your citizenship to another country, even though it's just a paper transaction, we think we can get you out of paying a whole bunch of taxes.

Well, it's not fair. It's not right. The lost revenue to Treasury means it's got to be made up somewhere, and that typically is going to be a bunch of hard-working Americans who either pay through higher taxes themselves or through reduced services. And in the meantime, the company is still using all the services and all the benefits of effectively being a U.S. corporation; they just decided that they'd go through this paper exercise.

So there is legislation working its way through Congress that would eliminate some of these tax loopholes entirely. And it's true what Treasury Secretary Lew previously said, that we can't solve the entire problem administratively. But what we are doing is examining, are there elements to how existing statutes are interpreted by rule or by regulation or tradition or practice that can at least discourage some of the folks who may be trying to take advantage of this loophole?

And I think it's something that would really bother the average American, the idea that somebody renounces their citizenship, but continues to entirely benefit from operating in the United States of America just to avoid paying a whole bunch of taxes.

We'll—we're reviewing all of our options. As usual, and related to the answer I gave Jonathan about executive actions, my preference would always be for us to go ahead and get something done in Congress. And keep in mind, it's still a small number of companies that are resorting to this, because I think most American companies are proud to be American, recognize the benefits of being American, and are responsible actors and willing to pay their fair share of taxes to support all the benefits that they receive from being here.

But we don't want to see this trend grow. We don't want companies who have up until

now been playing by the rules suddenly looking over their shoulder and saying, you know what, some of our competitors are gaming the system, and we need to do it too. That kind of herd mentality, I think, is something we want to avoid. So we want to move quickly, as quickly as possible.

Q. Just to clarify, the Federal contracting seems like an area that you've liked to—it's worked well for you on issues like promoting gay rights or contraception policy. Is it fair to assume that that would—attaching this to Federal contractors would be the first thing you would think of?

The President. Margaret, I'm not going to announce specifics in dribs and drabs. When we've done a thorough evaluation and we understand what our authorities are, I'll let you know.

Chris Jansing, NBC News.

Ukraine/International Sanctions Against Russia

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Russia said today that it is going to ban food and agricultural product imports. That was about \$1.3 billion last year. At the same time, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said that the massing of troops along the border of Ukraine increases the likelihood of an invasion. Are sanctions not working?

The President. Well, we don't know yet whether sanctions are working. Sanctions are working as intended in putting enormous pressure and strain on the Russian economy. That's not my estimation; if you look at the markets and you look at estimates in terms of capital flight, if you look at projections for Russian growth, what you're seeing is that the economy has ground to a halt. Somewhere between \$100 and \$200 billion of capital flight has taken place. You're not seeing a lot of investors coming in new to start businesses inside of Russia.

And it has presented the choice to President Putin as to whether he is going to try to resolve the issues in eastern Ukraine through diplomacy and peaceful means, recognizing that Ukraine is a sovereign country and that it is up ultimately to the Ukrainian people to make decisions about their own lives; or alternatively,

continue on the course that he's on, in which case, he's going to be hurting his economy and hurting his own people over the long term.

And in that sense, we are doing exactly what we should be doing. And we're very pleased that our European allies and partners joined us in this process, as well as a number of countries around the world.

Having said all that, the issue is not resolved yet. You still have fighting in eastern Ukraine. Civilians are still dying. We've already seen some of the consequences of this conflict in the loss of the Malaysian Airlines airline—or jetliner.

And the sooner that we can get back on a track in which there are serious discussions taking place to assure that all Ukrainians are heard, that they're represented, that the reforms that have already been offered by the Government in Kiev are implemented to protect Russian speakers, to assure decentralization of power—the sooner that we move on those, and the sooner that President Putin recognizes that Ukraine is an independent country, it's only at that point where we can say that the problem has truly been solved. But in the meantime, sanctions are working the way they're supposed to.

Q. The troops that are massing on the border are more highly trained. They seem to have more sophisticated weaponry, according to intelligence. Does that make you reconsider—as a few Democrats have suggested—providing lethal aid to Ukraine, given those troop movements?

The President. Well, keep in mind that the Russian Army is a lot bigger than the Ukrainian Army. So the issue here is not whether the Ukrainian Army has some additional weaponry. At least up until this point, they've been fighting a group of separatists who have engaged in some terrible violence, but who can't match the Ukrainian Army.

Now, if you start seeing an invasion by Russia, that's obviously a different set of questions. We're not there yet. What we have been doing is providing a whole host of assistance packages to the Ukrainian Government and to their mil-

itary, and we will continue to work with them to evaluate on a day-by-day, week-by-week basis what exactly they need in order to be able to defend their country and to deal with the separatist elements that currently are being armed by Russia.

But the best thing we can do for Ukraine is to try to get back on a political track.

David Ohito, the Standard.

Press Freedom, Counterterrorism Efforts, and Governance in African Nations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You have been hosting African kings, Prime Ministers, and Presidents for the last 3 days. But back home in Africa, media freedom is under threat. The work of journalists is becoming increasingly difficult. In Egypt, our Al Jazeera colleagues are in jail. In Ethiopia, dozens of journalists are in prison. In Kenya, they have passed very bad laws targeting the media. What can the international community do to ensure that we have a strong media in Africa and, more importantly, to secure the release of the journalists who are behind bars?

And, two, so many countries in Africa are facing threats of terror. I'm glad you've mentioned a few measures you're going to take. But what can the international community do also to neutralize terror threats in Mali, Cameroon, Nigeria, Kenya? Could that be the reason you have skipped Kenya in your visits to Africa? Thank you. [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm sorry, what was the last part of the question?

Q. Could the terror threats be the reason you have skipped Kenya in your visits to Africa?

The President. Oh, no, no, no. [*Laughter*] The—well, first of all, with respect to journalists in the media, the last session that we had on good governance emphasized that good governance means everybody has a voice, that government is transparent and thereby accountable. And even though leaders don't always like it, the media plays a crucial role in assuring people that they have the proper information to evaluate the policies that their leaders are pursuing.

And so we have been very consistent in pushing governments not just in Africa, but around the world, to respect the right of journalists to practice their trade as a critical part of civil society and a critical part of any democratic norm. The specific issue of the Al Jazeera journalists in Egypt, we've been clear both publicly and privately that they should be released. And we have been troubled by some of the laws that have been passed around the world that seem to restrict the ability of journalists to pursue stories or write stories. We've also been disturbed by efforts to control the Internet. Part of what's happened over the last decade or two is that new media, new technology allow people to get information that previously would have never been accessible or only to a few specialists. And now people can punch something up on the Internet and pull up information that's relevant to their own lives and their own societies and communities. So we're going to continue to push back against these efforts.

As is true on a whole range of issues—and I've said this in the past—many times, we will work with countries even though they're not perfect on every issue. And we find that in some cases, engaging a country that generally is a good partner, but is not performing optimally when it comes to all of the various categories of human rights, that we can be effective by working with them on certain areas and criticizing them and trying to elicit improvements in other areas. And even among countries that generally have strong human rights records, there are areas where there are problems. That's true of the United States, by the way.

And so the good news—and we heard this in the summit—is that more and more countries are recognizing that in the absence of good governance, in the absence of accountability and transparency, that's not only going to have an effect domestically on the legitimacy of a government, it's going to have an effect on economic development and growth. Because ultimately, in an information age, open societies have the capacity to innovate and educate and move faster and be part of the global

marketplace more than closed societies do over the long term. I believe that.

Now, with respect to terrorism, I think there's uniform concern of terrorist infiltration in many countries throughout Africa. Obviously, this is a concern that we have globally. A lot of the initiatives that we put forward were designed to partner so that countries, first and foremost, can deal with these problems within their own borders or regionally. And the United States doesn't have a desire to expand and create a big footprint inside of Africa. What we do want to make sure we can do is partner with the African Union, with ECOWAS, with individual countries to build up their capacity.

And one of the encouraging things in the sessions was a recognition that fighting terrorism also requires security forces that are professional, that are disciplined, that themselves are not engaging in human rights violations; that part of the lesson that we've all learned about terrorism is that it is possible in reaction to terrorism to actually accelerate the disease if the response is one that alienates populations or particular ethnic groups or particular religions. And so the work that we're doing, including the security initiatives that I announced today, I think can make a big difference in that direction.

It's not just a matter of us providing better equipment or better training. That's a part of it, but part of it is also making sure that these security forces and the intelligence operations are coordinated and professional and they're not alienating populations. The more we do that, the more effective we can be.

Last point I'll make is, on good governance, one of the best inoculators against terrorist infiltration is a society in which everybody feels as if they have a stake in the existing order and they feel that their grievances can be resolved through political means rather than through violence. And so that's just one more reason why good governance has to be part of the recipe that we use for a strong, stable, and prosperous Africa.

Last question, Jérôme Cartillier [Agence France-Presse].

Situation in Gaza and Israel

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Earlier today Israeli Prime Minister described the Gaza operation as "justified and proportionate." Do you agree with these two words? And Israel and Hamas seems to be at odds over prolonging the cease-fire. Are you hopeful the cease-fire—a true cease-fire—can be achieved? And what exact role can the U.S. play in the current talks going on in Cairo?

The President. I have said from the beginning that no country would tolerate rockets being launched into their cities. And as a consequence, I have consistently supported Israel's right to defend itself, and that includes doing what it needs to do to prevent rockets from landing on population centers and, more recently, as we learned, preventing tunnels from being dug under their territory that can be used to launch terrorist attacks. I also think it is important to remember that Hamas acts extraordinarily irresponsibly when it is deliberately siting rocket launchers in population centers, putting populations at risk because of that particularly—particular military strategy.

Now, having said all that, I've also expressed my distress at what's happened to innocent civilians, including women and children, during the course of this process. And I'm very glad that we have at least temporarily achieved a cease-fire. The question now is how do we build on this temporary cessation of violence and move forward in a sustainable way.

We intend to support the process that's taking place in Egypt. I think the short-term goal has to be to make sure that rocket launches do not resume, that the work that the Israeli Government did in closing off these tunnels has been completed, and that we are now in the process of helping to rebuild a Gaza that's been really badly damaged as a consequence of this conflict. Long term, there has to be a recognition that Gaza cannot sustain itself permanently closed off from the world and incapable of providing some opportunity—jobs, economic growth—for the population that lives there, particularly given how dense that population is, how young that population is.

We're going to have to see a shift in opportunity for the people of Gaza. I have no sympathy for Hamas. I have great sympathy for ordinary people who are struggling within Gaza. And the question then becomes, can we find a formula in which Israel has greater assurance that Gaza will not be a launching pad for further attacks, perhaps more dangerous attacks as technology develops, into their country, but at the same time, ordinary Palestinians have some prospects for an opening of Gaza so that they do not feel walled off and incapable of pursuing basic prosperity?

I think there are formulas that are available, but they're going to require risks on the part of political leaders. They're going to require a slow rebuilding of trust, which is obviously very difficult in the aftermath of the kind of violence that we've seen. So I don't think we get there right away, but the U.S. goal right now would be to make sure that the cease-fire holds, that Gaza can begin the process of rebuilding, and that some measures are taken so that the people of Gaza feel some sense of hope and the people of Israel feel confident that they're not going to have a repeat of the kind of rocket launches that we've seen over the last several weeks.

And Secretary Kerry has been in consistent contact with all the parties involved. We expect we will continue to be trying to work as diligently as we can to move the process forward.

It is also going to need to involve the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank. I have no sympathy for Hamas. I have great sympathy for

some of the work that has been done in cooperation with Israel and the international community by the Palestinian Authority. And they've shown themselves to be responsible. They have recognized Israel. They are prepared to move forward to arrive at a two-state solution.

I think Abu Mazen is sincere in his desire for peace. But they have also been weakened, I think, during this process. The populations in the West Bank may have also lost confidence or lost a sense of hope in terms of how to move forward. We have to rebuild that as well. And they are the delegation that's leading the Palestinian negotiators. And my hope is, is that we'll be engaging with them to try to move what has been a very tragic situation over the last several weeks into a more constructive path. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. And thank you all who participated in the Africa Summit. It was an outstanding piece of work. And I want to remind folks, in case they've forgotten, of the incredible young people who participated in our fellows program. We're very proud of you, and we're looking forward to seeing all the great things that you do when you go back home. All right?

Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 6:14 p.m. at the Department of State. In his remarks, the President referred to President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. A reporter referred to former President George W. Bush.

Remarks on Signing the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 at Fort Belvoir, Virginia

August 7, 2014

Hello, Fort Belvoir! Everybody, have a seat. I think I'm going to take Sergeant Major McGruder on the road. *[Laughter]* I'm just going to have him introduce me wherever I go. *[Laughter]* He got me excited, and I'm being—I get introduced all the time. So thank you, James, for your incredible service to our country. Give James a big round of applause.

I also want to say a big thanks to America's new Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Bob McDonald, who is here. Stand up, Bob. As some of you may know, Bob headed up one of the biggest, most successful companies in the world. But he also was a West Point grad, also a Ranger who served valiantly on behalf of his country. And this a labor of love for him, and